2021-2022 Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees

July 1, 2021

This document will be updated periodically. Revisions will be highlighted in yellow and the date will be updated.

The appropriate academic administrator is expected to charge their unit’s promotion and tenure committees prior to the committee beginning its work. Below are the key elements of the charge, to be augmented by a discussion of academic unit expectations.

- All committee members are expected to be familiar with academic unit guidelines as well as university guidelines (see vpfa.psu.edu for links to AC23, 2021-2022 P&T Administrative Guidelines, 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure FAQs).
- Prior to the committee’s first meeting, committee members must determine the format in which they will meet. Committees must decide to meet either in-person or virtually for ALL of the committee meetings that involve discussions about candidates.
  - Promotion and Tenure committees may not meet via a hybrid approach (i.e., with some members in person and some virtual). (see Administrative Guidelines, V.E.1) unless granted an exception by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.
- Conflicts of interest should be declared prior to the discussion of any candidate. Once a conflict of interest is declared, the member will be recused from the discussion and recused from voting of the candidate. (see Administrative Guidelines, V.E.2.). Members are encouraged to disclose possible conflicts of interest to the unit head and seek consultation about how to best manage the conflict.
- Only those members present for the discussion of a candidate may vote on the candidate. (see Administrative Guidelines, V.E.3.)
- All aspects of the promotion and tenure process are confidential. Confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process is to be respected forever, not just during the particular year of review. (see Administrative Guidelines, V.E.4.)
  - Discussions of candidates should not occur via email or in locations that do not maintain the privacy of candidates (see FAQ #26).
  - Personal notes must be securely destroyed beyond recovery immediately after the committee has reached a decision or concluded the promotion and tenure process (see FAQ # 25).
- All reviewing agents, administrators, or committees must consult with the unit/administrator that made the prior recommendation if they seek clarification or are considering rendering a recommendation or decision contrary to the previous level of review. Such consultations should be documented in the letter (see Administrative Guidelines, V.G. for more details).
- As per the Administrative Guidelines, II.A.& B., administrators and academic units develop written criteria and expectations for promotion and tenure.
  - Committees who either have questions about the contents of the dossier or believe
additional information is needed to determine whether the candidate has met the criteria and expectations specified by the level of review (i.e., campus/department, college, university), committee members should work with the appropriate administrator (e.g., department head/chief academic officer) to obtain the necessary information. (see Administrative Guidelines, V.G.).

- Committees may ask the relevant administrator (e.g., department head, dean, chancellor) to obtain from the candidate any publicly available item incorporated by reference in the dossier and add such material to the candidate’s supplemental materials (e.g., published manuscripts, syllabi).
- Reviewers are to confine their reviews to the contents of the dossier. For example, if h-indices or impact factors are not requested as part of the dossier to address unit criteria, these should not be accessed by the committee.

- It is critical that every level of review has access to the same information.
  - In consultation with the academic unit leader, information may be added to the dossier after a unit promotion and tenure committee has reviewed it, if that information was not available at the time the dossier was assembled and reviewed. Such additions must occur by February 1. Consistent with the principle that every level of review must have access to the same information, if information is added to the dossier, then the dossier must go back through all levels of review. (see Administrative Guidelines, III. F).

- Members of the committee should give due consideration to the judgement of disciplinary experts (see AC-23, 1).

- Charge items specific to the academic unit/level of review
  - See V.H.6 in the 2021-2022 Administrative Guidelines for information about level of review. A short summary is below.
    - Department: Evaluation of all three criteria in light of department guidelines.
    - College: Review campus and/or department recommendations in light of:
      - College criteria and expectations;
      - Equity among departments;
      - Procedural fairness.
    - University: Review all previous recommendations in light of:
      - University criteria and expectations;
      - Equity within and among colleges;
      - Procedural fairness.

- Remind committees of the impact of events of 2020/2021 (e.g., global pandemic/COVID, racial tensions).
  - Recognize that events of 2020/21 (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, social/racial tensions, political unrest) have had differential impact on faculty. Candidates were encouraged (but not required) to describe how these impacts influenced their teaching, research and creative accomplishments, service, librarianship, and patient care in the narrative statement (see the document Guidance for Promotion and Tenure Narratives). Note the impacts described by the candidate and how the candidate is working to overcome these impacts. Information shared in narratives
is to be used to contextualize a candidate’s work during the pandemic, rather than to make negative judgments about it.

- External reviewers were asked to be mindful of how the events of 2020/21 may influence a candidate’s achievement and trajectory. Language in the “Sample letters to external evaluators” was modified to remind reviewers of the impact of the events of 2020/21; see Appendix C of the 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines.

- Consider the specific impacts COVID-19 has presented within a faculty member’s discipline as well as within a faculty member’s research program or creative practice. Discuss within the committee challenges candidates may have faced. Committees at the first level review are asked to acknowledge such challenges were taken into consideration in their evaluation letters. If the committee does not have specific knowledge of the candidate’s discipline, they should consult Section III.C.9 of the Administrative Guidelines for guidance on how to seek this expertise.

- Be aware of how delivery of instruction and assessment of teaching effectiveness were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other events. Faculty members changed their teaching modality and engaged with students who were often highly stressed, an effort that took considerably more time and focus than in previous years. Changes were made to the assessment of teaching effectiveness as outlined in the document Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness during Calendar Years 2020 and 2021” posted on the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and these changes will be reflected in the dossier.

- Be familiar with adjustments to the promotion and tenure process made due to COVID; these adjustments are reflected in the 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Administration Guidelines and the P&T FAQ document, both of which can be found on the website of the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

- Consider the effects of the events of 2020/21 relative to a candidate’s career trajectory including the notion that impacts may extend both forward and backward. For example, a faculty member may have been working toward some culminating research achievement and thus the purpose of previous efforts may not be well reflected in the record. Or, a faculty member’s program of research may have stalled due to work conditions imposed by the pandemic or other circumstances.