

**Procedures for the Promotion of Assistant Professors  
to Associate Professor with Tenure**

*Department of Chemistry, University of Pittsburgh*

The timeline for the promotion process is fixed by the Dean's requirement that all promotion materials (the dossier, the results of the faculty vote, and the Chair's letter) be submitted to the Office of the Dean no later than October 31 of the 6<sup>th</sup> year.

The tenure and promotion review process should begin no later than the mid-summer prior to the beginning of the sixth year of the candidate's appointment. Candidates wishing to be considered earlier than this time should seek advice of their mentor and senior colleagues before initiating a formal request to the Chair.

In the Department the responsibility for the assembly of the information needed for the tenured faculty to formulate a recommendation (to the Dean) is delegated to an *ad hoc* Promotion Committee. Although it is desirable that this committee formulate a clear recommendation for or against the award of tenure and promotion, it is not mandatory. The committee must present a written summary of its activities, including all of the information collected internally and externally, and this report will form the basis of the documentation sent forward from the Department to the Dean.

The specific information to be assembled by the Promotion Committee is summarized below. All of this information is required to fulfill the Dean's guidelines.

- 1) External Evaluations. We are required to solicit the views of external experts who are capable of providing an informed and objective evaluation of the candidate's research and scholarly achievements. The Provost and the Office of the Dean have oversight of many departments, and there are differences among departments in their approach to the solicitation of outside letters. In the Chemistry Department, we expect to have twelve external evaluations. Previous experience indicates that less than 100% of the referees will respond. Therefore, we solicit evaluations from sixteen to eighteen external referees and the first task of the Committee will be to agree to an appropriate list of external referees.

To meet the mandated timeline, this list should be defined and letters sent by late August. The letters should request responses prior to October 1, in order to allow appropriate time for Committee deliberations and scheduling of a faculty meeting for discussion of the case by the third week of the month of October. The Promotion Committee report should be available for study by the tenured voting faculty at least five days prior to the meeting.

The assistant professor being evaluated should be asked to name potential referees, but Provost and A&S guidelines also specifically indicate that "under no circumstances should the Department solicit outside letters only from persons on the list submitted by the candidate. At least half of the letters should be solicited from persons not on the candidate's list of suggested referees...". We therefore ask a candidate to submit a list of six references only, with the understanding that we will use all of them unless we are aware of some

circumstances (such as a conflict of interest unknown to the candidate) which would render a particular referee unsuitable. Although it is not forbidden by University policy, our practice has been that external letters are not requested from either Ph.D. thesis advisors or postdoctoral mentors. It is also inappropriate to request evaluations from faculty who have been recent colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh, however, an exception may be considered when the candidate has collaborated extensively with such colleagues on work conducted at Pittsburgh.

The package submitted to the Dean requires a short paragraph outlining the qualifications of each of the external evaluators. The Promotion Committee is responsible for generating these vitae. The vitae should properly introduce the referee and demonstrate the referee's qualifications clearly.

- 2) Curriculum Vitae. The chair of the Promotion Committee will act as advisor to the candidate and the other two members of the Committee serve anonymously. The chair should help the candidate submit an up-to-date and complete curriculum vitae which presents the most informative possible picture of the candidate's accomplishments as an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh. It is therefore important that the chair of the Promotion Committee be well informed about the promotion process and the qualities of an effective dossier. The curriculum vitae should cover all the traditional areas, including scholarly publications, research funding, internal and external awards and honors, teaching achievements, external presentations and invited lectures.

It is the candidate's responsibility, with the assistance of any mentoring faculty and the chair of the Promotion Committee, to assemble an abridged version of the dossier to be sent to external referees. This dossier should include reprints or preprints of publications which the candidate feels to be particularly important in evaluating the research achievements, current funding, and a research précis or prospective analysis.

- 3) Documentation of Teaching Achievements. Detailed documentation of teaching achievements is an essential part of any positive recommendation for the award of tenure. The Dean's tenure review committee expects a report evaluating and establishing teaching effectiveness, and the Committee should pay particular attention to this need. It is strongly recommended that (in addition to the student teaching evaluations (OMET) which any candidate will have on hand ) the Department also ensure that the candidate's teaching is reviewed regularly within the peer review mechanisms and in accord with Department wide policies.

In addition to reviewing the peer evaluation reports on a candidate's teaching, it is valuable for the Committee to offer opinions of their own on the larger perspectives of the candidate's teaching contributions to the Department. To help the faculty reach an informed decision, the Promotion Committee may choose to address and answer the following questions:

- a) Why is the candidate an important member of the teaching faculty?
- b) What are the candidate's skills and successes as an undergraduate teacher?
- c) Is the candidate a successful graduate student mentor?
- d) What are the candidate's particular skills or techniques as a graduate student mentor?
- e) What is the significance of the candidate's qualities to the achievement of Departmental goals in both undergraduate and graduate education?

It is recommended that the Chair of the Department advise the Promotion Committee of these questions and discuss this with the candidate. The chair of the Promotion Committee can help the candidate assemble a portfolio of teaching materials.

- 4) Reprints, Preprints and Books. The full package for evaluation by the faculty and the Dean must include at least one copy of each paper, preprint, or book that is part of the candidate's scholarly work relevant to the promotion. A cover page, which lists all of this submitted material, should be included.
- 5) Sponsored Research. Within the curriculum vitae, or in a separate document, the candidate will prepare a detailed list of sponsored research support. In addition, the candidate should list all research grants and contracts which have been submitted, whether they have been successful, unsuccessful or are still pending, together with a summary of their current status.

The Promotion Committee report must be submitted in time for review by the Chair and in time to schedule the full faculty meeting. The faculty meeting must be held at least one week prior to the October 31 deadline for submission of results to the Dean. It is traditional that the Chair inform the candidate of the meeting result soon after the votes are tallied. The Department vote does not end the tenure review process, but it is an important milestone. In no case should the Chair discuss any aspect of the content of the meeting. The numerical scores of the vote are never shared with the candidate or with faculty members.

In the event of a divided vote, the Chair is to include in the summary recommendation to the Dean a balanced report on the meeting. If some faculty members are united against the majority, they may be asked to review the letter and advise on its completeness. In rare cases where there is no substantial majority, one or two representatives of the minority side may be asked to prepare a minority report. This report is to be included with all other materials submitted to the Dean and the rationale and existence of the minority report should be described in the Chair's letter.

On or around the beginning of the following calendar year, the Dean will appoint a tenure review committee (meetings take place generally in the period from January 15 to April 1). The tenure review committee studies the dossier, interviews representative senior faculty (usually the Chair of the Department) and advises the Dean on the central question. The final steps in the process and opportunities for appeal are all covered in the University's Policy and Procedures documents, available on the University web site.

## **Notes on Tenure Review Committee Responsibilities**

### ***The Promotion Committee.***

The Promotion Committee includes three members. The chair of the Committee also acts as advisor to the candidate in evaluating the content of the dossier to ensure that no essential information is missing. The name of the chair of the Promotion Committee is known to the candidate, but the remaining committee members serve anonymously.

The duty of the Promotion Committee is to oversee the collection of information relevant to the candidate's accomplishments in teaching, research, and service, and to write a summary report on the assembled information. The report of the committee should be organized into sections dealing with each area of activity. Objectivity is an essential element of a convincing report. Although the Department expects the report to conclude with a recommendation for or against promotion, the tone of the report should be not one of advocacy, but of judicious evaluation.

### ***Recommended Outline.***

- I. Evaluation of Research Activities.
  - A. Description of the general area of research and its importance.
  - B. Description of the candidate's research within this context.
  - C. Summary of the major contributions of the candidate to the field.

[This section should include a description of the candidate's accomplishments. It should explicitly address the nature of the accomplishments, the impact and importance to the field. This section should direct the reader to evidence bearing on these points. It is in this section that the external letters of evaluation should be discussed. It is important to place the letters in context and to help the reader to "decode" the letters. The reader may not know the standards and the vocabulary of the field. It may be appropriate to briefly discuss characteristics of the reviewer that might shed light on the letter. Evaluation of research plans and expectations for future contributions.]
  
- II. Evaluation of Teaching Activities.
  - A. Summary of courses taught by the candidate.
  - B. Description of the sources of information considered.
  - C. Analysis of each source of information, i.e. students' evaluations, peer evaluations, teaching statement, course materials, outside letters.
  - D. Analysis of the sum of the evidence. If problems exist or did exist, they should be addressed.
  
- III. Evaluation of Service Activities.

- A. Summarize contributions to the Department and help the reader to judge the quantity and quality of these contributions.
- B. Summarize contributions to FAS, the University, and the community.
- C. Summarize contributions (service other than research and teaching) that the candidate has made to the field.

***Special note.***

Committee members responsible for writing the report should remember that the report will be read by persons outside the Department who are not familiar with our field and expectations. Faculty who serve on the Dean's tenure review committee are accomplished scholars and they will be quick to recognize assertions made without factual evidence and assertions that are contradicted by the evidence.

***Guiding principles from the FAS By-laws.***

“Within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, tenure is awarded for demonstrated excellence together with the promise of continued excellence in scholarship, in whatever form that scholarship takes. Teaching and research (or creative activity), two principal functions of the University, are also the two principal forms of scholarship. The relationship between the two is complex, and no single formula could serve as an adequate guide in every tenure case. All departments in the University Faculty of Arts and Sciences should be concerned with advancing knowledge as well as teaching students, but the balance between research and teaching need not be the same for every department, or for every Faculty member. Although the balance may be shaped over time by the Faculty member and the department, it must be justified to the University when the Faculty member stands for tenure. Excellence in research should not excuse incompetence in teaching, and teaching that is not founded in scholarship can make no claim to excellence.

“In judging excellence, the indispensable ingredient for promotion to tenured rank should be creative or intellectual vitality as reflected in the candidate's teaching, and in the candidate's contribution to the advancement of knowledge or in his or her artistic activity. Vitality is best revealed through the candidate's activities—classroom performance, research, writings, artistic creations. These should be assessed for the evidence they reveal of intellectual power and originality. Quantitative measures of productivity and popularity, however useful, are no substitutes for qualitative judgments. Evaluations of the candidate's record of achievement will be used primarily to judge future promise. Elements of this evaluation shall include the quality and originality of the candidate's contributions to the advancement of knowledge, the candidate's status with respect to the standards of excellence in the discipline, and performance as a teacher. Tenure is not a reward for past services, but a kind of contract, a lifetime of security in exchange for a lifetime of continued creative scholarship.”