

## *Forest and Wildlife Ecology - Department Policies - Procedures for the Guidance, Annual Evaluation, and Tenure Review of Assistant Professors*

Department policy related to the guidance, annual evaluation, and promotion and tenure of probationary faculty members

Faculty Policies and Procedures outline the process by which a departmental executive committee shall establish procedures for the guidance and annual evaluation of each probationary faculty member (“assistant professor”) (7.05) and for the review of probationary appointments (7.06). The purpose of this document is to outline the department norms, expectations, and processes by which we implement these campus policies.

- Each assistant professor shall receive a copy of the criteria for tenure and promotion established by the appropriate divisional committee, and a copy of this document.
- The department’s executive committee shall inform each assistant professor if any changes occur in departmental goals or other circumstances that might alter the opportunity or timing for promotion and tenure.
- All parties should be familiar with the department procedures (this document) and relevant campus policies governing probationary appointments. Links to campus policies are embedded in this document.

### **Guidance (Mentoring)**

- Every assistant professor will be provided with a guidance “mentor” committee (FPP 7.05B). The mentor committee typically includes three members and is comprised of one or more members of the Executive committee appointed by the department chair, who will also designate one to be mentor committee chairperson. Where appropriate, a mentor committee member may be from an outside department, but all will be tenured UW-Madison faculty. For joint appointments, mentor committee membership will include Executive committee members from both units with appointments being made jointly by chairs of the employing departments. It is highly desirable that membership of the mentor committee remain the same throughout the pre-tenure period. That said, special circumstances would permit a change when reasonable, e.g. at the request of the assistant professor. The department chair is the point of contact for change requests.
- The mentor committee is charged with providing to assistant professors “information and advice on the areas of responsibility of tenure-track professors, i.e., research, teaching, service, and outreach. Experts outside the department who can provide specific information and advice on one or more of these areas of responsibility should be consulted when appropriate as determined by the probationary faculty member and/or the mentor committee” (7.05.B.3).
- In addition, mentor committees shall monitor teaching and service responsibilities to ensure that workload and match of assignments are appropriate to the assistant professor’s expertise. In general, the department seeks to minimize department service obligations for pre-tenure faculty.
- The mentor committee shall have primary responsibility, in consultation with the assistant professor, for the collection and examination of relevant documents including annual personnel reports and curriculum vitae; statements of research, teaching, and service; course syllabi and teaching evaluations; copies of publications and funding applications; and any other supporting documents.
- The mentor committee shall meet with the assistant professor at least once each year to offer counsel and to assist in the preparation of necessary documentation of progress towards tenure prior to executive committee’s annual review of the assistant professor. The mentor committee chair shall send a letter to the department chair annually outlining the mentor committee’s interactions with the assistant professor. The department chair includes this document in annual reports to the dean.
- The mentor committee, in consultation with the assistant professor and the department chair, will identify a schedule for peer-review of teaching and the individuals to provide the reviews. Once completed, peer reviews of teaching will be sent to the department chair, and subsequently distributed to the assistant professor and the mentor committee. The general expectation is that all courses, with the exception of graduate seminars, will have at least one peer review completed per offering.

## Annual Evaluation

- The goal of the annual evaluation is to evaluate the assistant professor's activities toward providing constructive guidance toward a successful tenure outcome. At the same time, annual evaluations collectively inform any review of a probationary appointment (i.e., contract renewal, tenure decision).
- Responsibility for developing the annual evaluation shall be assigned to an oversight committee made up of members of the departmental executive committee (FPP 7.05.C-E). The assistant professor(s) shall be informed of the membership of his/her oversight committee. Membership of the oversight committee may change from year to year at the discretion of the department chair.
- Each year, the oversight committee shall provide the departmental executive committee with an annual evaluation of the progress of each assistant professor. At least once each year, one or more members of the oversight committee and the department chair shall discuss with the assistant professor the departmental and divisional committee expectations and their progress toward tenure. The assistant professor may respond to the evaluation in writing or may, upon request, address the Executive committee regarding the evaluation.
- The oversight committee, in consultation with the assistant professor and department chair, shall have primary responsibility for the collection of supporting materials and preparation of a written report for the executive committee prior to executive committee review of a probationary appointment (FPP 7.06, next section).
- In general, annual evaluation documentation will be more comprehensive as the assistant professor moves toward a promotion and tenure decision; thus, building the evidentiary base for that decision.

## Review of Probationary Appointment

- The goal of any review of a probationary appointment is to reach a personnel decision about the assistant professor. The two typical decisions are associated with (1) contract renewal and (2) promotion and tenure, but a review can occur at any time.
- Any review must occur in timely fashion to meet any contractual and/or governance deadline imposed by CALS, campus, or appropriate divisional committee. For example, the initial contract for a probationary faculty member is three years. As such, a review must be completed before the end of the second year to allow for the case of non-renewal. See timeline below.
- Any review will include the following material: annual personnel reports; curriculum vitae; statements of research, teaching, and service; course syllabi and teaching evaluations; copies of publications and funding applications; and any other supporting documents. The assistant professor is responsible for providing these materials to the department chair at least one month prior to the Executive committee meeting when the review will be conducted. Consideration for promotion and tenure will additionally include the letters from external reviewers, provided by the department chair.
- In all reviews of probationary faculty, the department will follow all procedures specified in FPP [7.07](#). The department chair is the responsible party for ensuring timeliness, appropriate procedures, and required notifications.
- Favorable action for re-appointment during the pre-tenure period (i.e., contract renewal) or a recommendation for promotion and tenure requires the affirmative votes of two-thirds of all the executive committee members.
- The department chair will communicate all review decisions in writing to the assistant professors within five working days per FPP 7.07.E.
- Any adverse decision will follow FPP [7.08](#).

## Promotion and Tenure

### *Process for External Reviews*

All divisional committees require external reviewers as part of the review toward granting tenure and promotion. Given their critical importance, ensuring that all selected reviewers are fair and arms-length reviewers is essential. The executive committee expects external reviewers to be well-established scientists (e.g., full professor or late associate

professor), usually with academic appointments at peer units and/or peer universities, but given our disciplines, scientists in federal research units may also be included. Our process, which typically begins toward the end of the fifth year of the probationary period (or earlier if an early tenure decision is requested) is as follows.

1. The department chair will form a small, ad hoc committee of two executive committee members to assist in the creation, assembly, and review of the tenure dossier. A key charge of this committee is the selection of highly qualified external reviewers who they believe are capable of performing an objective assessment of the assistant professor’s progress toward tenure and potential for future significant accomplishment. The ad hoc committee will provide its list of at least 10 names to the department chair.
2. Around the same time, the department chair asks the mentor committee chair to visit with the assistant professor to also make a list of potential qualified reviewers and, importantly, to identify any individuals whom the assistant professor believes would be unable to provide a fair review. The mentor committee chair will provide these names to the department chair.
3. The department chair, in consultation with the ad hoc committee, will review both lists and select those from whom review letters will be solicited, those whom will be held in reserve, and those struck from the list.
4. The department chair solicits review letters, the number guided by requirements of the respective Divisional Committee. Solicitation includes the following materials provided by the pre-tenure candidate: curriculum vitae, statements of research, teaching, and/or extension (for extension faculty); 2-4 sample publications; and any other materials that might assist the external reviewers (e.g., sample of extension materials, statements of extension impact).

*Timeline for Typical Tenure Case\**

|                                    | Continuing Assistant Professor<br>(including contract renewal)  | Tenure and Promotion   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| May<br>(November)**                |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department chair notifies assistant professor of upcoming promotion and tenure review and outlines expectations and timing.</li> <li>• Department chair establishes ad hoc committee and initiates process to select external reviewers.</li> </ul> |
| June-October<br>(December – April) |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department chair solicits and receives letters from external reviewers.</li> </ul>  |
| October<br>(April)                 |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant professor provides all necessary documentation (see divisional committee checklist) in final tenure-package format to the department chair.</li> </ul>  |
| November<br>(May)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department chair assigns oversight committee members.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department chair begins compiling tenure dossier and schedules date for executive committee vote.</li> </ul>  |
| December –                         |   |  |

|                                     |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| January<br>(May – June)             |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive committee reviews the dossier and votes on whether to recommend promotion and tenure. Department chair distributes materials at least 2 weeks in advance of this meeting.</li> <li>• If the motion is accepted (in favor of promotion with tenure), the department chair finalizes the chair's letter and forwards the dossier to the dean toward divisional committee consideration.</li> <li>• If the motion fails, the department will follow FPP 7.08. Department chair notifies the dean.</li> </ul> |
| February<br>(August)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant professor provides review materials to the oversight committee and department chair.</li> </ul>  |  |
| March<br>(September)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight committee report due to department chair.</li> <li>• Department chair places review on executive committee agenda and shares materials with executive committee at least 2 weeks prior to meeting.</li> </ul>  |  |
| April-May<br>(October-<br>November) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive committee reviews the oversight committee report and assistant professor materials, and votes.</li> <li>• If the vote is favorable (i.e., endorse positive review, renew contract), department chair forwards recommendation to the dean.</li> <li>• If the vote is unfavorable, the department will follow FPP 7.08. Department chair notifies the dean.</li> </ul> |  |

### Evaluation and Review Criteria

Tenure is granted on significant, documented activity and accomplishments in research, teaching, extension, and/or service and convincing evidence that these will continue in the future. Given the

diversity of appointments, assignments, disciplines, and divisional affiliations in the department, there is no tenure “recipe.” That said, the executive committee will expect solid performance and encouraging trajectories consistent with department and disciplinary norms. Below are typical criteria the executive committee will consider as appropriate to the individual’s appointment, discipline, and division.

### *Teaching*

- Teaches undergraduate and/or graduate courses and receives promising and positive evaluations from students and regular peer visits.
- When opportunity for improvement is present, seeks professional development, course revisions, and other steps to improve performance and student outcomes.
- Advises undergraduate students.
- Mentors and trains graduate students and postdocs.

### *Research*

- Conducts and leads research that is published and otherwise shared and validated by peers (e.g., scholarly, peer-reviewed publications); research productivity should be near departmental and disciplinary norms, or/and trajectory should demonstrate increasing output and impact towards soon reaching those norms.
- Individual contributions to collaborative research, proposal, and projects, as well as the broader field should be clearly evident.
- Seeks and secures sufficient financial and other resources to conduct research; even unsuccessful competitive research funding and awards can provide evidence of peer validation.

### *Extension (may include outreach)*

- See CALS Extension Specialist Excellence document ([pdf](#)).

### *Service (including outreach)*

- Serves on department and college and/or campus committees or governance structures.
- Participates in scholarly and/or professional societies or activities (e.g., peer-reviews).
- Contributes to the Wisconsin Idea through service to the state, nation, and/or world.

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\*Table adapted from School of Journalism and Mass Communication’s “Guidelines for Annual Review of Assistant Professors”

\*\*Table assumes August initial starting month of employment and decision required by May of decision year. Parenthetical month is for those with January starting month. Timing is approximate.

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Key contact and responsible party: F&W Ecology Chair and Executive Committee

Timing: Annual reviews coincide with the anniversary of the initial appointment.

Process for updating or changing policy: Any formal policy change would require action by the Department Executive Committee.

History of changes: Policy substantively revised and adopted November 8, 2018. Initial policy of merged department was adopted in March 2009.

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Guide Documents to Hub Faculty

FWE Department Policies and Procedures