

Outline of Guidelines for Promotion & Tenure in the College of Science

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The following document summarizes a combination of P&T guidelines from cited information from the Office of the Provost, the updated Faculty Handbook, the existing COS faculty guidelines, and additional guidance provided on April 13, 2017 from the COS Level 2 committee. The next step is for individual departments to expand on their own guidelines and criteria for defining “High Competence” and “Genuine Excellence”.

In accordance with Article V of the Bylaws of the College of Science (<https://cos.gmu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/cos-faculty-bylaws/>), the COS Promotion and Tenure Committee, also known as P&T Level 2, is charged with providing an independent evaluation of the dossiers of tenure-line faculty under consideration for promotion and/or tenure. To perform that vital academic function, the College has established the following guidelines for evaluating the credentials of a candidate in a tenure-line position for promotion and tenure including promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure, Associate Professor without tenure to Associate Professor with tenure, and promotion of a tenured Associate Professor to Full Professor.

Background: Faculty Handbook (FH) 2.4

(https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/bbcswebdav/orgs/AU_Provost_PW/Provost/Administration/GMU_FACULTY_HANDBOOK_2018.pdf)

Appointment without term, also known as tenure, must be based on **achievement rather than perceived potential**; and appointment without term should leave no doubt about the candidate’s value to the University over an extended period. The primary consideration in the evaluation of the candidate’s achievements will be the extent to which these achievements continue to improve the academic quality of the University.

A successful candidate for the rank of **Associate Professor with tenure** in the College of Science must:

1. **Achieve High Competence** in teaching, research and scholarship, and service
2. **Achieve Genuine Excellence** in teaching or research and scholarship, based on evidence that his/her contribution has some “significant impact beyond the boundaries of this University.”
 - a. If teaching: Influence beyond the immediate classroom
 - b. If research: significant influence on colleagues at other institutions in this country or abroad.

Only candidates meeting the above criteria can be recommended for promotion and tenure.

A successful candidate seeking promotion to the rank of **Full Professor with tenure** in the College of Science must:

1. **Maintain High Competence** in teaching, research and scholarship, and service
2. **Maintain Genuine Excellence** in teaching and/or research and scholarship.

- a. Evidence of significant impact beyond the University must be more substantial than that necessary to achieve tenure or promotion to the Associate Professor rank.
- b. Clear and convincing evidence must be provided of an established external reputation in the primary field based on consequential achievements.

Only candidates meeting the above criteria can be recommended for promotion.

Promotion & Tenure recommendations are based on an **evaluation of performance over the faculty member's total period of service at Mason** (FH 2.7.1) Scholarly achievements prior to Mason are considered, but weighed less heavily. Committee recommendation letters at each level of review should clearly delineate the achievements that occurred while the candidate was a faculty member at Mason in a tenure-line position from achievements accomplished in other positions.

Adherence to professional ethics should be considered in the evaluation for promotion or tenure (FH 2.4) and commentary included in the committee recommendation letter at each level of review.

Unethical or unprofessional conduct may include but not limited to: repeated instances of workplace bullying, intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse, sabotage, and threatening behavior. (FH 2.10.2)

References on professional ethics include (FH 2.10.1 and 2.10.2):

- Statement of Professional Ethics and Statement of Plagiarism – American Association of University Professors (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-professional-ethics>)
- Ethical standards of respective professional associations
- University policies (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>) and procedures related to professional ethics.

I. Effective Teaching

According to the Faculty Handbook, effective teaching is demonstrated by: (FH 2.4.1)

- Clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods, presentations
- Successful learning outcomes
- Development and implementation of new courses and programs
- Development of instructional materials, including applications of new technologies
- Training and supervision of teaching assistants; mentoring graduate students and post-docs; clinical and field supervision of students; and student advising

According to the Faculty Handbook, procedures for collecting evaluative data include: (FH 2.5.1) – Office of Provost in consultation with University Faculty Standing Committee on Effective Teaching

- Anonymous course evaluations
- Comparisons with faculty teaching similar courses
- Minimum peer evaluation on development/implementation of new courses and programs; appropriateness of courses materials used; level and quality of student advising; learning outcomes.
- Additional peer evaluation such as observation of classroom teaching; evaluations by mentors; assessments for teaching performance by colleagues and teaching portfolios.
- Quantitative and qualitative data

The committee recommendation letter at each level of the candidate's dossier review must provide one of the following **three ratings** of the candidate's accomplishments in teaching:

1. **Genuine Excellence**
2. **High Competence**
3. **Does not rise to the level of High Competence**

Genuine Excellence in Teaching is defined by the Provost as:

(https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/bbcswebdav/orgs/AU_Provost_PW/Provost/Faculty%20Affairs/EvaluatingExcellence.pdf)

1. *Outstanding classroom teaching and learning outcomes, as evidenced by the usual measures, including but not limited to student evaluations. Other evidence of teaching effectiveness includes peer observations; letters of support from students, alumni, and colleagues (solicited and unsolicited); student comments based on the whole population, not selected samples; and/or student focus groups. Thoughtful reflection on teaching will be sought in the teaching statement.*
2. *Effective teaching is demonstrated by the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods and presentations, and by successful learning outcomes. Example syllabi, other course materials created by the candidate, and student work used with permission can be used as sources of evidence.*
3. *When applicable, evidence of educational work with students outside the classroom. For example, supervising undergraduate research, master's theses, and dissertations; advising and mentoring activities; and/or clinical and field supervision of students.*

4. *Faculty leadership in promoting student learning and teaching excellence. For example, developing successful and innovative curricula and programs; developing instructional materials; teaching-related training, supervising, and mentoring of other faculty and graduate students; developing teaching innovations (e.g., the use of technology); leading team-teaching initiatives; and/or building support for educational partnerships within and across institutions.*
5. *Teaching excellence across a variety of classes, e.g., large and small, face-to-face and hybrid or online, undergraduate and graduate, while maintaining a consistent and appropriate teaching load.*
6. *Maintenance of at least highly competent research, evidenced by the usual measures, including outside letters.*
7. *Evidence of teaching and learning impact beyond the classroom. This involves some combination of conference presentations, workshops, performances, or exhibitions; invitations to other places; texts or teaching materials, including electronic; or articles on teaching and/or learning outcomes (see also #3 above). External funding for curricular development, piloting teaching methods, or advising could serve in this category also.*

Note that building a case for Genuine Excellence in Teaching and steps toward appropriate evidence usually emerges over the career of the professor and is not a last minute event. Outside evaluative letters should be based on a holistic evaluation of all of the above criteria. Very occasionally, exceptions to these criteria can be made, based on truly unusual and evidenced classroom impact and impact on other faculty members on campus.

The Level 2 Committee proposed the following description of High Competence in Teaching on April 13, 2017.

Significant evidence of high teaching competency is expected for faculty members being considered for tenure with promotion to Associate Professor as well as for promotion to Full Professor. Generally, a candidate should have taught courses at various levels during the tenure-track years.

Evidence of teaching competency for promotion and tenure includes the following measures of quality:

- Course syllabi and samples of creative instructional materials, including online teaching.
- Teaching awards and other recognitions of teaching
- Evidence of student learning outcomes
- Development of new courses and curriculum development
- Favorable student evaluation scores
 - Student teaching evaluations must be very favorable (~3.0 in all individual categories, and ~3.5 average in overall quality of teaching).
 - The faculty member's quality of teaching excellence and commitment to students should be evidenced in student testimony provided on course evaluation and unsolicited accolades.
- Positive peer evaluations of teaching
- The faculty member is expected to be an active member in curriculum development, whether that be teaching new courses, revising existing courses or proposing new programs.

The following measures are encouraged, but not required, for High Competence in Teaching:

- Textbooks published
- Teaching-related funded grants
- Instructional activities with teachers in schools or science museums
- Documentation of innovative teaching methods
- Scholarly papers on teaching

Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Teaching within the College of Science is further defined in Appendix A and Appendix B by the departments in accordance with these guidelines.

II. Research and Scholarly Achievement

According to the Faculty Handbook, research and scholarship achievement is demonstrated by: (FH 2.4.2)

- Original publications and peer reviewed contributions to advance the discipline or the integration of the discipline with other fields
- Original research
- Application of discipline- or field based knowledge to the practice of the profession

According to the Faculty Handbook, procedures for collecting evaluative data include (FH 2.5.2):

- Peer review of the candidate's work within the local academic unit (LAU)
- External evaluations from qualified referees who are not associated with the University
- Each LAU will develop its own specific guidelines for the selection and use of external referees.
- Annual review of research and scholarly activities on an individual basis to discuss strengths and weaknesses.

As proposed by the Level 2 committee on April 13, 2017, candidates requesting consideration for tenure are expected to have established a vigorous, independent, productive research program that is supported by peer reviewed external funding. There is considerable variation in research subfields between and within each department.

As a leader in the University's research enterprise, the College of Science will evaluate research and scholarship data on a combination of the following six factors and reflected in the committee's recommendation letters. The relative importance of each factor varies by subfield.

1. Steady productivity of peer-reviewed publications in leading refereed journals.

- a. There is considerable variation by sub-field in the number of publications, the leading journals and the number of authors on each publication. The number of publications, the number of authors on each publication and the journals in which the work is published should be in accordance with expectations of the relevant subfield at peer institutions.
- b. Metrics for journal evaluation by committees may include the total number of publications, the total citation count, the h-index or similar productivity metrics, and/or a ranking of the journal in the candidate's specialized field.
 - i. Departments shall develop and regularly review a satisfactory level of publication metrics expected per faculty member in their discipline
- c. The impact of the publications will be evaluated by citation rates and impact factor of the journal taking into consideration the time that has passed since publication and the specific nature of the scientific field.
- d. Leadership role as first author in a substantial number of publications as evidenced in external reviewer letters.
- e. Last, corresponding, or primary authorship by the candidate's students, fellows or post-docs in a substantial number of publications, as evidenced in external review letters.

2. Actively pursuing and obtaining external funding

Candidates are expected to establish and maintain a vigorous research program that has the potential for growth, sustained high quality research contributions and continued funding.

- a. Evaluation of external funding applied for and/or secured by the candidate will be based solely on documented activity data submitted by the Office of Sponsored Programs during the Level 1 review on proposals, awards and expenditures during the candidate's eligible time at Mason.
- b. The candidate must demonstrate a persistent and sustained effort to secure funding through the submission of grant proposals.
 - i. Departments shall develop and regularly review a satisfactory level of expected proposals per faculty member in their discipline
- c. Levels of funding awarded should be commensurate with the level expected in the candidate's subfield at peer institutions.
 - i. Departments shall develop and regularly review a satisfactory level per faculty member of expected external funding awarded in their sub-field.
- d. Levels of funding should sustain the candidate's research program.
- e. If available, the success rates for proposals at relevant programs of major funding agencies can provide helpful context when measuring a candidate's productivity.

3. Strong endorsement by external reviewer letters

- a. Letters of external reviewers provide an essential independent evaluation of the quality and importance of a candidate's research and will be considered carefully.
- b. FH 2.5.2 states that LAUs should have guidelines for the selection and use of external reviewers.
- c. The existing COS Promotion and Tenure Committee Guidelines states:
[\(https://cos.gmu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-tenure-committee/\)](https://cos.gmu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-tenure-committee/)
 - i. *The committee places considerable weight on the evaluations of highly qualified external reviewers. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Level 1 committee to choose these with care.*
 1. *In particular, the dossier should clearly spell out which reviewers were selected by the candidate, and which were selected by the Level 1 committee.*
 2. *Normally, at least 4 out of the mandatory 5 reviewers should be truly external, i.e. not have collaborated with the candidate, unless the Level 1 committee makes a credible case for an exemption to this rule, e.g., based on the nature of the field.*

3. *The definition used here for “external” reviewers is the same as that used by federal funding agencies in their rules to avoid conflicts of interest.*
 4. *Additional letters from collaborators can always supplement the minimum five, provided they do not result in the candidates choosing more than 40%.*
- d. Reviewers should be above the rank of the candidate under consideration for P&T.
 - e. All evaluation letters received from solicited reviewers (even if in excess of five letters) should be made available to the Department and the Level 2 Committee and included in the same section of the dossier.

4. Steady record of invited and contributed talks

Candidates are expected to engage in active dissemination of research results through regular presentations at major national and international conferences as well as at professional meetings, workshops and other universities.

5. Scientific peer and public recognition of scholarship competency such as:

- Receiving fellowships and awards
- Publication of scholarly books
- Editor or member of editorial board for major journals
- Frequent requests to be an expert reviewer by funding agencies
- Organizing or co-organizing conferences or symposia in candidate’s research field
- Frequent review of manuscript submissions to major journals
- Invention reports, patents, and commercial development for research-related inventions
- Development of scientific software, large-scale codes, or databases that are shared with the scientific community
- Press coverage of research results

6. Sustained research mentorship through student research supervision

The committee recommendation letter at each level must provide one of the following **three ratings** of the candidate’s research and scholarship accomplishments:

1. **Genuine Excellence**
2. **High Competence**
3. **Does not rise to the level of High Competence**

Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Research within the College of Science is further defined in Appendix A and Appendix B by the departments in accordance with these guidelines.

III. University and Professional Service

According to the Faculty Handbook, University and Professional Service are demonstrated by: (FH 2.4.3)

- *Involvement in governance and operational activities outside the classroom*
- *Minimum University service required - attendance at faculty meetings and participation in faculty personnel matters and curriculum development*
- *University service beyond that which is required will be given positive weight in personnel decisions.*
- *Each LAU will make known in a timely manner its requirements concerning the minimum acceptable level of University service and its policies concerning positive weight to be given for intramural service in excess of the minimum.*
- *Professional Service is demonstrated by:*
 - *Contributions to recognized societies and associations that promote research and scholarship*
 - *Consultancies and cooperative projects that make the faculty member's discipline and knowledge and skills available to individuals, groups, agencies outside of the University*
 - *LAU will develop and make known 1) specific discipline- or field-based expectations regarding types of professional service that will be considered appropriate as evidence in annual evaluations and for reappointment, promotion, and tenure cases.*

According to the Faculty Handbook, evaluative data includes: (FH 2.5.3)

- *Peer review of university service*
- *Procedures for the evaluation of external professional service are similar to those employed in the evaluation of research and scholarship*

The committee recommendation letter at each level must provide one of the following **two ratings** of the candidate's University and professional accomplishments:

1. **High Competence**
2. **Does not rise to the level of High Competence**

A definition for High Competence in Service was proposed by the Level 2 committee on April 13, 2017,

- Service to the department, University and scientific community is expected of all candidates for promotion and tenure. In general, it will include a combination of the following:
 - Active participation in departmental, college and/or university committees
 - Student advising
 - Regular reviews of journal manuscripts
 - Regular reviews of grant proposals from funding agencies
 - Participation in conference organizing committees
 - Community outreach
 - Membership in and service to professional societies
 - Active engagement in departmental activities

IV. Promotion from Associate to Full Professor with Tenure:

Additional guidance from the Level 2 Committee on April 13, 2017 regarding promotion to the rank of Full Professor states a candidate must provide **compelling evidence of significant recognition among peers in the candidate's field at the international level**.

Candidates seeking promotion to Full Professor based on genuine excellence in research and scholarship should meet all of the above criteria for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, but with significantly higher expectations.

- There should be significant evidence of research accomplishments, funded external grants, and strong publication productivity, obtained after the candidate acquired tenure.
- The criteria used in evaluation of research excellence for promotion to rank of Full Professor are the same as those outlined above but with significantly higher expectations.
- The candidate is expected to have a strong track record of:
 - Highly cited peer-reviewed publications after obtaining tenure.
 - Continued research funding through peer reviewed grant proposals (e.g. NIH, NSF, NASA, DOE, DoD, etc.).
 - Invited for featured presentations at conferences/workshops/research institutions.

Recognition of the applicant by his/her peers at the international level may be demonstrated through:

- Appropriate citations of his/her publications (for example, using the publication impact metrics mentioned above)
- Invited presentations at major scientific meetings
- Awards, election as a fellow of national and international professional societies
- Frequent invitations to serve as a scientific reviewer on panels for proposals and publications,
- Appointment as editor of journals or book series, or acting as the lead organizer of major conferences

Comments by external reviewers will play an essential role and the guidelines for obtaining outside letters are the same as those outlined for tenure.

The candidate is also expected to have mentored graduate students to the successful completion of Ph.D. and/or Master's degrees.

Candidates seeking promotion to Full Professor based on genuine excellence in teaching should meet all of the above criteria for promotion to Associate Professor, but with significantly higher expectations regarding pedagogical publications, educational grants, and peer recognition of innovative teaching methods.

- In particular, the candidate is expected to demonstrate international recognition and publish a textbook or textbooks used by other universities; or create major online resources widely used in other educational institutions.
- Candidates are further expected to have supervised PhD and/or Masters students conducting education related studies.