



2023-2024 Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees and Administrators

July 1, 2023

The appropriate academic administrator is expected to charge their unit's promotion and tenure committee 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](#), [2023-2024 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines](#), [2023-2024 Promotion and Tenure FAQs](#)).
- Prior to the committee's meeting to discuss candidates, 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). (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.E.1) unless granted an exception by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.
- **Abstention is not permitted.** 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 for the candidate. (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.E.2.). The recused member will not have access to the materials of the candidate. 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. (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.E.3.). Every effort should be made to schedule meetings at a time when all committee members can attend. A minimum of three committee members is required for a discussion to occur (IV.C.2).
- 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. (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.E.4.)
 - Discussions of candidates should not occur via email or in locations that do not maintain the privacy of candidates (*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 (*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 (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.G. for more details), **including a short summary of the conversation**.

- 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 (e.g., campus/department/school/division, college, university) should work with the appropriate administrator (e.g., department head/chief academic officer/dean/chancellor/director of academic affairs) to obtain the necessary information. (*Administrative Guidelines*, V.G.).
- As referenced below, if additional materials are added to the dossier, the dossier must be sent back through every level of review (*Administrative Guidelines*, III. F).
- Committee members may access publicly available items incorporated by reference in the dossier (e.g., published materials). Ideally, committees will ask the relevant administrator (e.g., department head, director of academic affairs, dean, chancellor) to obtain these publicly available items referenced in the dossier and add such material to the candidate's supplemental materials.
- Committee members are to confine their reviews to the contents of the dossier and the supplemental materials. 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.
- **Committees must apply the same criteria to all candidates regardless of the length of the probationary period.**
- 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 (*Administrative Guidelines*, III. F).
- Charge items specific to the academic unit/level of review
 - See V.H.6 in the [2023-2024 Administrative Guidelines](#) for information about level of review. A short summary is below.
 - Department/School/Division/Campus
 - Evaluation of all three criteria in light of department guidelines
 - **The review should contextualize the candidate's work from a disciplinary perspective; subsequent levels of review rely on this analysis**
 - Members of committees should give due consideration to the judgment of disciplinary experts (*AC-23, I.*).
 - **Use of ratings**
 - **Split ratings are discouraged (e.g., very good-satisfactory) and if used, subsequent levels of review will use the lower rating as the judgment of the committee**

- **A rating for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is required (see Appendix A of the Administrative Guidelines) and the following rating scale must be used: Excellent, very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.**
 - **Unsatisfactory carries a negative connotation; satisfactory conveys a neutral evaluation; very good, a positive one; and excellent, a highly positive evaluation.**
 - **Ratings for the other areas are encouraged but not required; units are asked to apply ratings consistently across candidates within the unit**
- **The basis of the vote of the committee should be reflected in the letter.**
 - **When votes are not unanimous, committees are encouraged to include the minority and majority opinions.**
- **College:**
 - Members of committees should give due consideration to the judgment of disciplinary experts, including the previous level of review and external letter writers (*AC-23, I.*).
 - Review campus and/or department recommendations in light of:
 - College criteria and expectations;
 - Equity among departments;
 - Procedural fairness.
 - **Use of ratings**
 - **Split ratings are discouraged (e.g., very good-satisfactory) and if used, subsequent levels of review will use the lower rating as the judgment of the committee**
 - **A rating for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is required (see Appendix A of the Administrative Guidelines) and the following rating scale must be used: Excellent, very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.**
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 - **The basis of the vote of the committee should be reflected in the letter.**

- **When votes are not unanimous, committees are encouraged to include the minority and majority opinions.**
- **University:**
 - **Members of committees should give due consideration to the judgment of disciplinary experts, including the previous level of review and external letter writers (AC-23, I.).**
 - **Use of ratings**
 - **Split ratings are discouraged (e.g., very good-satisfactory) and if used, subsequent levels of review will use the lower rating as the judgment of the committee**
 - **A rating for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is required (see Appendix A of the Administrative Guidelines) and the following rating scale must be used: Excellent, very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.**
 - **Unsatisfactory carries a negative connotation; satisfactory conveys a neutral evaluation; very good, a positive one; and excellent, a highly positive evaluation.**
 - **Ratings for the other areas are encouraged but not required; units are asked to apply ratings consistently across candidates within the unit**
 - **The basis of the vote of the committee should be reflected in the letter.**
 - **When votes are not unanimous, committees are encouraged to include the minority and majority opinions.**
 - **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) and that the impact of these events is expected to extend into the future.**
 - 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 2023-2024 Administrative Promotion and Tenure 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 the 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 "[Guidance on Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness](#)" 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 2023-2024 *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.