

## Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure

School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

*Effective May 13, 2021*

The School of Education's guidelines for faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure are consistent with the University's guidelines in the [Faculty Handbook](#). The School of Education is an interdisciplinary community with faculty appointed in both the tenure and appointment streams, and our guidelines recognize and reflect a range of faculty roles and expertise. Regardless of role or appointment type, promotion and/or tenure is awarded for demonstrated excellence, together with the promise of continued excellence in three areas: **scholarship/research**, **teaching/mentoring**, and **service/engagement**. All three of these areas are core functions of the University and all three are vital to the School's mission and vision. The relationship between the three is complex, and the balance between them will not be the same for every case. Determining excellence in each of these areas is a peer judgment and is the responsibility of the faculty, and quantitative measures of productivity or impact are ranked no higher than qualitative judgments. The strongest arguments for excellence would be aligned with the School of Education's [mission and vision](#) and [strategic plan](#).

The process for faculty in the appointment stream or tenure stream is similar: The candidate assembles a dossier of evidence in support of their promotion, the Department Chair requests evaluations from external letter writers, the Department votes on the case, the School of Education's Promotion and Tenure Committee votes on the case, and then the Dean writes a letter of review that is considered by the Provost's office and, in the case of conferral of tenure, the Chancellor's office.

Although the process is similar, the argument and evidence for promotion are often different for faculty in the tenure and the appointment streams. In the **tenure stream**, research/scholarship is always the most important category for promotion to associate or full professor, and for the conferral of tenure. Tenure is not a reward for past services, but a kind of contract— a more permanent status of employment that reflects one's continued creative output, responsibilities, and contributions for stewardship of our scholarly, engaged culture. Although research/scholarship is a very important category, strength in that area does not excuse weakness in teaching/mentoring or service/engagement. Every successful case of promotion in the tenure stream will contain evidence of **important contributions in and across all three areas**.

**Appointment stream** faculty often have their primary focus on teaching/mentoring and/or service/engagement. Excellence in one or both of these areas can form the main basis for promotion, and appointment stream faculty will want to shape the contents of their dossier and personal statements to present strong arguments for how their work in these areas has advanced the mission/vision of both the School of Education and the University as well as contributed to positive change at a local, regional, national, and/or global level. Evidence of research/scholarship is also necessary for promotion in the appointment stream; however, quantitative and qualitative expectations for scholarly contributions may look quite different than they would for tenure-stream faculty.

The Department Chair plays a central role in mentoring faculty towards promotion. In particular, faculty receive yearly evaluations from the Chair that include specific feedback on whether the faculty contributions are consistent with expectations for promotion in the appointment stream or promotion and tenure in the tenure stream. The Chair should also suggest additional senior faculty members who can act as mentors. When faculty seek promotion, the Department Chair will be responsible for obtaining external letters from experts in the field who are asked to evaluate the excellence and impact of a candidate's work. Thus, as they work towards promotion, faculty should be in dialog with their Chair about the specific expectations that external individuals in their area are likely to have for the promotion of tenure and appointment stream faculty.

### **Research/Scholarship**

All faculty are expected to be active scholars/researchers throughout their career, making consistent contributions to building knowledge in their disciplines. There are differences in the Research/Scholarship category for appointment stream and tenure stream faculty.

For **tenure-stream faculty**, evidence for research/scholarship excellence comes from articles, books, chapters, external grants, fellowships, awards, and/or conference papers/presentations, among other activities. Peer reviewed work is valued most in tenure and promotion decisions, as it reflects an external judgement of excellence. Quality, impact, and quantity of research output are all potential indicators of excellence. Faculty in the tenure stream are expected to publish regularly. Collaborative work is valued, and including students as co-authors is particularly encouraged. However, for assistant professors seeking promotion to associate professor with tenure, it is important to publish first-authored articles, and in highly-ranked, core disciplinary journals. Different disciplines lend themselves to different publishing practices, but a general rule of thumb (although not a guarantee) is that assistant professors in the tenure stream should aim to average at least two peer-reviewed articles per year, in addition to other kinds of research output. All faculty in the tenure stream are expected to actively seek external funding to support their work. Success in obtaining external funding is highly desirable, but not necessary for promotion to associate professor with tenure. Most faculty promoted to full professor with tenure will have a track record of success with external funding.

**Appointment stream faculty** often have their primary focus on teaching/mentoring and/or service/engagement; however, they are also scholars who build and share knowledge, often with the goal of impacting practice. Thus, scholarly publications and/or conference presentations might be more likely to be written for practitioner or policy audiences. Evidence of scholarship can also include the creation of textbooks or instructional media, evaluation reports, and professional development modules, among other products. It is desirable, but not required, that a candidate will have received internal or external funding to support teaching/mentoring, service/engagement, or research/scholarship. Other forms of participation in grants can also be important (e.g., consulting on a research grant as a subject-matter specialist). These are examples, and the potential forms of scholarship are many. The key feature of scholarship is that it builds new knowledge and/or contributes to practice improvement, and demonstrates reflection, synthesis, and a commitment to communication with a larger field or community.

## Teaching and Mentoring/Advising

As a premiere public institution, our responsibilities include teaching, mentoring, and advising students. All faculty are expected to be committed to excellence in teaching. In the School of Education, this includes a focus on equity, justice, and anti-racism, engaging learners and encouraging student agency, and developing innovative pedagogy and advising/mentoring practices that incorporate and respond to student and colleague feedback. Faculty should take a scholarly approach to their work with students, adopting a reflective, exploratory stance and demonstrating a commitment to being in dialog about teaching, mentoring, and advising across the School and University. Evidence of this commitment can include developing new courses and instructional innovations, integrating emerging technologies, active, engaged, and excellent mentoring and advising of students, student evaluations of teaching, and peer evaluation of teaching through formal review processes and/or by working with more experienced mentors.

## Service/Engagement

Service and engagement are expectations of all faculty. Some faculty are active in their discipline, serving as peer-reviewers or editors, participating in and organizing conferences, serving on national committees, etc. Faculty should be engaged with the University and the School of Education, serving on committees, taking on leadership roles as appropriate, and developing new ways for work in the University to have greater impact in the region, nation, and world. Faculty also sometimes do work to improve education and well-being in the world, partnering with educators and communities involved in policy, developing interventions, creating assessments, conducting evaluations, doing foundational work that allows others to engage more effectively, etc. Some faculty will devote considerable effort in cultivating partnerships and community relationships as part of their research and/or teaching activities. This should be considered in establishing expectations for promotion or tenure, as their intellectual contributions and innovation are registered in part through significant societal impact. For some cases, departmental evaluation committees may need to bring in additional expertise and/or calibrate expectations for external references to ensure that a candidate's full breadth of achievements is evaluated.

## Process

**May.** Chair informs Dean's Office of candidate's intention to pursue promotion. Before this time, candidates should have discussed their intention to go up for promotion with their Chair and other senior faculty and should have begun dossier preparation.

**June.** Chair solicits external letters, due September 1. The candidate, if they choose, can suggest up to six names for external letters. The chair, in consultation with their faculty, develops a list of additional names independent from the candidate's list. A minimum of six external letters is required – with at least three letters from referees who were not on the candidate's list of suggested names. Sometimes we fail to receive letters that are promised, so initially soliciting nine or ten letters is a good idea. The chair should record a potential letter writer's reasons for not accepting the invitation to write for a candidate. Candidate delivers dossier to Chair by June 15. Chair sends dossier to external letter writers.

**September.** Chair collects all external letters and puts them into dossier.

**October.** All full-time department faculty at or above rank meet to discuss evidence from the dossier. Tenure stream faculty above the candidate's current rank vote by secret ballot on cases in the

tenure stream. All full-time faculty above the candidate's current rank vote by secret ballot on appointment stream cases. If there are fewer than five faculty who can vote on a particular case, then the Dean's Office will appoint additional rank-appropriate faculty from other departments in the School of Education. If the department vote is in favor of promotion or tied, the Chair writes a transmittal letter to the Promotion and Tenure committee that includes the outcome of the secret ballot and a narrative characterizing the faculty discussion of research/scholarship, teaching/mentoring, and service/engagement. The chair's letter should represent the opinion of the faculty and not the chair's singular point of view. In addition to the department letter, if a candidate for promotion has had significant involvement with another unit on campus, the appropriate administrator (e.g., center director or head of a different academic unit) should be asked to comment on the case and that letter should be included in the dossier transmitted to the Promotion and Tenure Committee. If the department vote is not in favor of promotion, the chair informs the candidate that the case will not move forward. The candidate can request that the Promotion and Tenure Committee review the dossier despite the lack of support at the department level.

**November.** The Promotion and Tenure Committee meets to discuss and vote in a secret ballot. The University requires the advice of two levels of review for each consideration of promotion to associate or full professor or for the conferral of tenure. The department vote plus the vote of the Promotion and Tenure committee is how the School of Education meets this requirement. In this two-tiered system, it is possible that a faculty member would participate in a review at both levels. However, it should be understood that a faculty member has only one vote in any given case.

**December.** By December 1 the Promotion and Tenure Committee sends a letter to the Dean characterizing their discussions of the case and including the outcome of the secret ballot.

**January.** To recommend tenure and/or promotion, the Dean writes a detailed letter to the Provost summarizing an independent opinion on the entire case. Letters are currently due to the Provost by Feb 1 for Associate Professors and March 15 for Full Professors. The cover letter should provide a full account of the case and the role of the candidate within the context of the School of Education's mission/vision and strategic plan. The letter should provide a balanced explanation of the candidate's contributions and the impact. In addition to providing an interpretation of the letters from external referees, the cover letter should indicate the other types of evidence used to inform the Dean's recommendation. The cover letter should include vote tallies from both the department and Promotion and Tenure Committee votes. The number of actual votes should be noted. Reasons for abstentions at any level should be explained. If there is a minority opinion, then the cover letter should address the reasons for the dissent. A representative for the dissenting views might be invited to submit a minority report.

**The Following Fall.** Candidates who have been recommended for promotion and/or tenure are informed of the outcome of their cases by the Office of the Provost and/or Chancellor. Review of cases can take several months. Candidates whose cases are successful are invited to give a talk to the School of Education community to share their work widely, celebrate their achievement, and set the stage for future work at their new rank.

[University Procedure 02-02-10 Faculty Reviews and Appeals](#) outlines appeal procedures for faculty who have been denied promotion or tenure.

## Promotion Dossier

An electronic dossier describing the candidate's qualifications should be developed by the candidate. The department Chair, the candidate's mentor, or a person designated by the Chair should assist the candidate in preparing the credentials document. The dossier should include the following sections and subsections, in this order:

### A. Table of Contents

### B. Promotion Materials

1. Personal Statement
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Transmittal Letters (Chair's letter, P&T letter, Dean's letter)
4. External Letter Procedures
5. External Review Letters
6. Yearly review letters from the Chair or, if appropriate, the Dean (added by Dean's office after P&T review)

### C. Research

1. Scholarship
2. Funding
3. Impact on Educational Practice

### D. Teaching and Mentoring

1. Courses and Seminars
2. Course Evaluations
3. Peer Evaluations of Teaching
4. Advising, Mentoring, and Supervision Committees

### E. Professional Service

1. National and international service to the field
2. Regional service to the field
3. University, school, and departmental service
4. Consulting

## Promotion Materials

1. Personal Statement. Written by the candidate, this statement interprets the candidate's accomplishments in scholarship/research, teaching/mentoring, and service/engagement.
2. Curriculum Vitae. The candidate provides a full CV. Student co-authors should be indicated on all publications and presentations by an asterisk. A candidate may wish to add quantitative measures of publication impact on the CV at the beginning of the publication section, but this is not required.
3. Transmittal Letters. These are written by the department Chair and become part of the dossier, Promotion and Tenure Committee, and Dean, as each completes their respective step in the procedure.

4. External Letter Procedures. The Chair includes information about the credentials of each letter writer and whether the referee was suggested by the candidate or by the chair. The chair also provides a full accounting of all persons solicited, those who agreed to provide letters, and letters ultimately obtained. This accounting would include the reasons given for not agreeing to write for the candidate and/or agreeing to write but ultimately not sending a letter.
5. External Review Letters. Referee letters should be sought from well-regarded experts in similar and/or related fields--without defining the area too narrowly. A broader net allows a larger pool from which referees can be drawn and also encourages opinions on the impact of the candidate's work on larger areas of scholarship and practice. Although some referees may be persons who have had previous professional association with the candidate—such as doctoral supervisor, collaborator, or co-author—most of the letters should be from scholars who know the candidate primarily because of their knowledge of the candidate's work and its impact. Referees who work at Universities must be at or above the promotion rank and it is also desirable if University-based referees are from places that are regarded as equal, or better, than the University of Pittsburgh. Referees should be asked to make critical judgments about the candidate's work and on its significance and impact. Further, referees should be asked to compare the candidate with others in the field at a comparable stage of development. Finally, it is very helpful and revealing to have writers say whether the candidate would be promoted at the referee's own institution (if the letter writer works at a university) and whether the referee would support that promotion. All external referee letters received should be included in the dossier, whether favorable or unfavorable. We suggest eight or more letters for the strongest dossiers, but a minimum of six external letters is required with at least three letters from referees who were not on the candidate's list of suggested names. Faculty in the **tenure stream** should have at least six letters from faculty at other universities. Faculty in the **appointment stream** should have at least three letters from faculty at other universities, but can reach the required minimum of six by also requesting letters from regional, national, or global experts who work in practice, policy, or non-university research settings, or from faculty at Pitt who are not in the School of Education.
6. Yearly Review Letters from Chair/Dean. Once the dossier is at the Dean's office, it should be supplemented with copies of annual review letters that were sent to the candidate. Minimally, these written reviews should consist of a letter to the faculty member which contains statements as to whether or not the faculty member's performance in teaching, research and service meet School of Education expectations. Detailed comments regarding these areas may be included and should be included in cases where performance does not meet expectation in any area.

### Scholarship/Research

1. Publications. The candidate should include examples of their published and in press work. Candidates can also include submitted work that has not yet been accepted or published. The candidate's peer-reviewed work should be well represented, but any scholarly work can be included.
2. Funding. A track record for external funding can be established by the CV and personal statement, but candidates can optionally choose to include examples of grants in the dossier. This might be particularly important for candidates who have applied for funding but have not yet been successful, as it gives the reviewers of the dossier a chance to evaluate quality.
3. Impact on practice. The candidate can include evidence of efforts to connect scholarship and practice, including, but not limited to: professional development materials; learning tools, materials, or

environments; partnerships with practitioners; policy briefs; written products aimed at communicating research to public or practitioner audiences, etc. This section of the dossier is an opportunity for appointment stream faculty to make a strong case for their scholarship as it relates to practice and/policy in their field. This section can also include consulting, with the primary consideration in evaluating consulting being the quality of the work, whether it is of such unique character that it helps to build a discipline, and whether it is a substantial public service. Evidence of meeting these criteria from consulting might include evaluation reports, white papers or policy statements, descriptions of learning environments or tools, etc.

### **Teaching and Mentoring**

1. Course Syllabi. The candidate should include three representative examples of syllabi developed or revised in the last several years.
2. Course Evaluations. Student evaluations from at least four courses selected by the candidate must be included (the submission of evaluations from all of the candidate's courses is encouraged but not required).
3. Peer Evaluations of Teaching. For promotion to associate professor, at least one peer evaluation of teaching should be included.
4. Advising, Mentoring, and Supervision Committees. Although evidence of advising and mentoring can be established from the CV and personal statement, the candidate can add additional evidence in this section as appropriate (e.g., lists of advisees and their current status/employment and/or student milestone committees).

### **Service and Engagement**

Although work in these categories can be established from the CV and personal statement, the candidate may wish to include additional statements, information, and/or artifacts here to help make the case for impact through national and international, regional, or university service and engagement.