

CCAS Promotion and Tenure Dossier Preparation Guidelines

August 15, 2024

Introduction

Each year the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences distributes its “CCAS Promotion and Tenure Dossier Preparation Guidelines” to department chairs and program directors. This document -- updated here for AY 2024-25 -- supplements the Provost’s guidelines for promotion and tenure dossiers. A separate document spells out the procedures for the promotion of contract and special service faculty.

The P&T process is a protracted and complicated one; the rules are detailed. Please read this document carefully and follow the schedule and guidelines closely. Any questions about specific or general issues should be referred to John Philbeck (CCAS_ViceDeanFA@gwu.edu), the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs in CCAS.

Promotion and Tenure Checklist Introduction

1. Department Chairs and Program Directors should confirm with Dean’s Office their list of faculty up for promotion and tenure and begin soliciting external evaluators (usually in the month of May prior to review year). As noted by the Provost, early consideration—before the date specified in the candidate’s initial appointment letter—will not be approved except in very rare circumstances.
2. Size of Voting Committee in the Department or Program: All tenure and promotion actions shall be initiated by at least an absolute majority vote of the eligible members of the department or program in which the candidate holds their primary appointment. The minimum number of faculty members voting on a promotion and tenure or promotion-only case should be **no fewer than five**. In instances where the minimum number of rank-eligible faculty members cannot be attained, the department chair or program director should contact the Dean’s Office (ccas_facaffairs@email.gwu.edu) and, in consultation with and approval of the Dean’s office, will appoint faculty members from other units to bring the number of voting faculty up to the minimum. The above applies to all cases of contract renewal, promotion, and promotion and

tenure for the Academic Year 2024-2025 and beyond.

3. Tenure Dossiers should be compiled in a Box folder and then shared with the Dean's Office by December 1st, 2024. Promotion-only Dossiers for tenured faculty under consideration for promotion to Professor rank should be compiled in a Box folder and then shared with the Dean's Office by January 12th, 2025. Each bullet should be its own subfolder.

- **Chair's Letter of Transmittal**
 - Includes: Decision and department voting results, discussion of review process, analysis of research, teaching, and service relative to excellence standard
- **An up-to-date c.v. for the candidate**
- **Letters from External Evaluators (minimum of five)**
 - Includes the request letter, a list of materials submitted to evaluators, and each letter in a separate pdf. Please do not include full C.V.s of the evaluators. In assembling a list of evaluators, it is important to select impartial individuals of the appropriate rank at strong institutions with relevant scholarly expertise for the case in question.
- **Teaching Materials**
 - Includes teaching statement and supporting student surveys and classroom visitations. Student evaluations and peer evaluations should remain in separate pdfs.
- **Research Materials**
 - Includes research statement and supporting material (e.g., books, journal articles, reviews, etc.) that provide the scholarly basis for recommending the candidate's tenure and/or promotion. Each publication should be its own pdf in the folder. For cases of promotion to the rank of full professor, provide only materials that have appeared since that last personnel action (promotion and tenure). Providing a link rather than a pdf may be acceptable, but please be sure that the link does not link to a repository maintained by the candidate, as the candidate might be able to identify external reviewers when they access the material.
- **Service Materials**

****Please see Appendix B for more detailed list of dossier materials****

The Promotion and Tenure Process: A Guide

Preamble

The Promotion and Tenure process is a most important part of our academic life. Every effort should be made to assure a fair and thorough evaluation of candidates' dossiers. To do this means that we must also proceed in a careful and timely manner and do so with academic rigor. In addition, we must be sensitive to the broad range of our disciplines and the multidimensional nature of scholarship and teaching.

The granting of tenure is not only important; it is also among the most difficult and complex decisions we make in this, or any, university. No candidate in probationary status has a right to achieve tenure simply because the candidate has performed at a level of competence over the required period. When we award tenure, we are not merely evaluating a brief past but speculating as best we can on the probable productivity, flexibility, and intellectual growth that will characterize a scholar/teacher over three to four decades. We are reflecting, moreover, on the role of that person's academic interests within the discipline broadly but most particularly within the prospective direction of this department and this University.

According to the Provost's office, "the criteria of sustained excellence required for promotion and tenure as stated in the Faculty Code language approved by the Board of Trustees in June 2015 is the standard for promotion and tenure." The Code notes that positive promotion and tenure decisions should be made for those who "achieved excellence in their disciplines through their contributions to research, scholarship, or creative work in the arts..., teaching, and engagement in service, and who demonstrate the potential to continue to do so, so that the university may advance its mission of scholarship, higher education, and service to the community." The Provost notes that

[i]t is incumbent that schools and Departments putting candidates up for tenure or promotion demonstrate that the candidate has met this standard. The preparation of the file, the solicitation of letters, and the decision of the faculty (either a department's decision or the school as a whole in non-departmentalized units) should be made with the goal of assessing the candidate in terms of this excellence standard.

Every promotion and tenure case should be approached by the departmental personnel committee as neutral: There should be *no presumption either for or against the recommendation of promotion and tenure for the candidate*. Only when all external evaluations have been received and reviewed, and all other relevant evidence assessed, should the department's eligible members discuss, and then vote upon, their recommendation. To these judgments we must bring not our personal preferences but every element of scholarly dispassion and rigor that we apply to our academic work.

I. Calendar

- May 1 – Solicit external letter writers.
- July 1 – Candidate's dossier for distribution to external evaluators should be submitted to the Department by no later than July 1.
- December 1 - Recommendations for tenure and promotion due in the Dean's office.
- January 12 - Recommendations for promotion-only dossiers are due in the Dean's office.

II. The Dossier

Dossiers should be as complete as possible and should include a *thorough assessment of teaching, scholarship, and service*. A lack of evidence in a file suggests a deficit; candidates need to demonstrate that they are excellent and worthy of tenure and/or promotion. No one will ever claim that a candidate has published too many books or articles or has contributed too many creative performances; by contrast, a failure to show evidence of good teaching, a sufficient quality and quantity of scholarship, of an appropriate level of service, and where appropriate success in external funding, are likely grounds for a denial.

Required dossier components are outlined in the Provost's guidance. In addition, please include a copy of the chair's mid-tenure evaluation letter, and a copy of the Department's bylaws with the relevant sections on tenure and promotion highlighted or flagged.

The department should also have available the following information in case it is requested by the CCAS Tenure and Promotion Committee:

1. Teaching evaluations (not summaries) of classes taught
2. Copies of other relevant scholarly works
3. Additional materials as needed (unsolicited letters, etc.)

Details of each of the foregoing are below:

1. Chair's Letter of Transmittal. The chair's comments, on behalf of their senior colleagues, play an important role in the P&T process and constitutes an assessment/overview of the entire case. Members of the department's tenure and promotion committee should be able to review and comment on a draft of the chair's letter, but its final authorship is the chair's responsibility. Transmitting letters, as noted by the Provost, should be analytical and assess the candidate in terms of the stated criteria for promotion and tenure. In particular, College Promotion and Tenure Committee members and the Dean need to know or consider the following:

Procedural information

- How the evaluators were selected (that is, which names came from the candidate's list and which names were generated by the promotion committee/members of the voting faculty);
- How the chair implemented the procedures indicated in departmental bylaws; assurance that the criteria for tenure and/or promotion, as stated in departmental bylaws, were faithfully employed in making the department's tenure and/or promotion recommendation for the candidate;
- A statement of the chair's recommendation along with the departmental vote underpinning it (including number of eligible votes absent or abstaining); the nature of the department's vote, with some representation from the chair (or a tenured colleague) of the dissenting as well as the majority views. Please note that College and School bylaws require an absolute majority of eligible members of the academic department, not a majority of those voting. Faculty are obligated to make judgments on these important questions; all eligible faculty members should, whenever possible, participate in the deliberations and vote in the P&T process;

What constitutes excellence in your domain

- Include statement of your department or discipline's expectations for excellence;
- Discussion of guidance given to candidate in mid-tenure review letter;

Your analysis

- Which of the candidate's publications/works senior colleagues regard as the most significant, influential, and effective;
- The relative status in the field of relevant journals, proceedings, book chapters, reviews essays, etc.;
- Assessment by the department of the candidate's research excellence, as reflected in the external evaluators' letters, including consideration of any negative or critical observations by the evaluators;
- Discussion of the candidate's contributions to the administration of the department, to its intellectual life, to the University, and to the profession;
- Assessment of the candidate's role in the department's current and planned strategic thrusts in curriculum and research;
- Assessment of the candidate's teaching performance;
- Where relevant, a statement of the candidate's current and potential scholarly and teaching relationships with colleagues in other departments, other programs, and other schools of the University.

2. Candidate's CV. Please provide information specified in the Provost's guidance document.

3. Candidate's Statements. Three statements from the candidate about past and prospective plans for professional development, in scholarship, service and teaching, are very important.

These need not be more than a couple pages in length, but every candidate should be able to outline professional directions with some particularity. We are interested, after all, in the lifelong career prospects of the candidate.

4. Letters of evaluation and commentary. Include the external letters of evaluation. Please also include a statement that presents the credentials of the external evaluators in a way that indicates their standing in the field and the reasons they were chosen. (Asterisks or other devices should indicate those known to the candidate and the nature of their acquaintance.) Please do not include evaluator CVs in this section. A copy of the model letter sent to potential evaluators should be included in the dossier, as a context for understanding their comments. Every letter that is received from each invited evaluator, no matter what its content, should be forwarded with your recommendation; a lesser standard of scrupulousness reduces our integrity as a whole faculty. If the department placed special emphasis on one or more letters, please explain why this was done in the transmittal letter.

5. Teaching Evaluations.

- A record of the candidate's course assignments (including enrollments, whether graduate or undergraduate, and whether a new preparation or redesign was required), semester by semester over the probationary period, helps to gauge breadth of participation in the teaching enterprise.
- Summaries of student teaching evaluations from at least the preceding 3-5 years should be included for every course taught. We would like to know what the response rate was for these evaluations and an explanation of the rating scales, i.e., what is a high score and what is the departmental mean. Have the actual evaluations available in case they are requested by the P&T committee or the Dean.
- For all classroom visitations made by faculty, a statement concerning the observations and copies of the peer evaluation are appropriate. Multiple peer observations by different individuals over a number of semesters are desirable and expected.

6. Publications and Professional Works. One copy of each of the candidate's publications/works (or slides, tapes, etc.) that were sent to outside reviewers must accompany the dossier. If additional publications, scholarly works, or reviews of a candidate's books/performances/exhibitions are available, please include them in a separate binder or box for review by the P&T committee.

Because the Promotion and Tenure Committee members are not usually expert in the candidate's discipline, it is extremely helpful if the Chair's letter can tell the committee about:

- The quality of the journals in which the articles are published or the stature of the publishing house in which the candidate's book(s) appear(s);
- Whether the discipline stresses book or article publication, or both;
- How the quality of the published scholarship measures up to disciplinary standards;

- In the case of the creative and performing arts, what activities constitute important evidence of professional productivity;
- What constitutes outstanding vs. standard vs. substandard grant activity for the field.

7. Departmental/university/external service. Include a report on the service of the candidate to the department or program, college, university, profession, and community.

III. External Evaluations

External references validate a candidate's work and provide a fresh, independent view of the quality of scholarship and creative activity that a candidate presents.

A. Number of Evaluators. The Provost requires at least **five** letters from external evaluators. Per the CCAS Bylaws (Addendum B, section A.4), A majority of letters cannot come from the candidate's list. Thus, if the minimum of five letters is used, then no more than two letters should be from evaluators on the candidate's list; the other three should come from the department's list. The College and the CCAS Promotion and Tenure Committee recommends that an additional 1-3 letters be requested, usually from the department's list, because its members find the additional comments to be quite helpful. (Additional letter requests are also useful because some scholars who agree to write letters fail to do so; having a built-in back up ensures that the minimum number of letters will be submitted).

NOTE: if you notice that you have fewer than 5 letters, or that more than half come from the candidate's list, please notify the Dean's office as soon as possible and before the department vote.

B. Source and Selection of Evaluators. As our procedures specify, the candidate and the appropriate members of the department should provide lists of evaluators well qualified to evaluate the scholarly work. The chair and the candidate should, of course, agree on the subfield in question, so that unconventional scholarship is not inappropriately judged; on the other end, some representation of the core of the discipline should appear. (The candidate should also be permitted to name any members of the discipline who, because of scholarly controversy, might not provide objective evaluation and ought to be excluded from the department's list¹). In ideal situations, the candidate's list and the senior colleagues' list will converge on a group of effective, dispassionate evaluators. *In the completed dossier, it should be indicated which evaluators were from the candidate's list, which were from the department's list, and which were on both lists.*

¹ Beyond that, however, the final list of evaluators **must not be shared with the candidate.**

In choosing objective evaluators, please remember that a) a dozen “big names” in any field are extraordinarily burdened with these requests and often provide sketchy assessment and b) minor figures from second- or third-tier universities have a far narrower purview from which to judge and may carry little weight with a Committee drawn from colleagues outside your discipline. We want to seek the comments of recognized scholars, scientists, or artists at institutions who are “players” in the field. Please feel free to discuss with the Dean the proposed list and its sources in this light.

As the Provost specifies, the external evaluators should offer an impartial view of the candidate’s contribution and future promise. If one discovers that a letter writer is not impartial, e.g., has coauthored a work with the faculty candidate, or you have a question about whether an individual is impartial, you should contact the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs.

All letters of evaluation are welcome and all received must be included in the dossier. The goal is to obtain at least five, preferably more, impartial, professional evaluations from those who may know the candidate’s work or name, but not necessarily the candidate personally.

C. Contacting and Informing the Evaluator. Once the list of potential evaluators has been determined, chairs are to contact them by email to see if they are willing to serve as an evaluator for the candidate and can do so within time constraints. Potential evaluators are to be asked to give a detailed, analytic comment on the candidate’s scholarly or creative writing or other work and its contribution to the advancement of the field. Once an evaluator has agreed to this important task, the chair is to send them the appropriate portion of the candidate’s dossier and a letter of request and explanation of the task they are being asked to perform. It is desirable that the letter of evaluation include discussions of which of the candidate’s public works are most important and how the candidate ranks compared to other scholars/artists at similar stages in their careers.

The portion of the dossier sent to the evaluator should include copies of any professional work not readily available to the evaluator. With the candidate’s consent, the department may choose to send works-in-progress that have achieved a reasonable degree of polish but have not yet appeared in print or in on-line venues. Evaluators are being asked to address only the candidate’s scholarship, so inclusion of information on teaching and service is not necessary.

The letter of evaluation ***should not include*** a discussion of whether the candidate would be recommended for tenure and/or promotion at the evaluator’s own institution. Only we can know our more junior colleagues’ role in teaching, service, and College and University life. A sample letter to an evaluator who has agreed to the task is attached as Appendix A.

IV. Confidentiality

The integrity of the promotion and tenure process rests upon both the informed and responsible participation of the voting members of the faculty and on the confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process. Information about colleagues' comments and votes, the external evaluators' letters (or even their names), and the nature of the deliberative process should remain completely confidential; participating members should not share any information about the process with the candidate. The department chair /program director should reiterate this very basic point to the voting faculty verbally and in writing *prior* to any review of the external letters or deliberations about the case. The department chair/program director alone should communicate any pertinent information to the candidate; no information about the nature of the deliberations, votes, external evaluations, and the like should be shared with either the candidate or any parties outside of the department or Dean's office.

V. Chair's Transmittal Letter

- Report of department vote, including negative opinions;
- Discussion of candidate's scholarship/creative activity;
- Brief explanation of stature of evaluators, methods (and reasons) for selection, and from which list -- the candidate's or the department's -- the evaluator was selected;
- Discussion of negative or critical assessments by the external evaluators;
- Sample copy of letter sent to evaluators;
- Discussion of evaluators' letters;
- Explanation of candidate's role in collaborative research/co-authored articles;
- Discussion of candidate's role in the department, and, as appropriate, college and university;
- Evaluation of teaching evaluations, compared to remainder of department.

Appendix A

Sample letter for External Evaluator

Letter / Email 1: The Invitation to Evaluate

Name and Address of Evaluator

Dear Professor _____:

On behalf of the Department of _____ at George Washington University, I am requesting your help in our evaluation of Professor _____ for promotion to the rank of associate/full professor with tenure. As part of the tenure review process, we are soliciting assessments of Professor _____'s research contributions from academic colleagues. We would very much appreciate your willingness to provide such an assessment. A copy of Professor _____'s curriculum vitae is attached.

I am very aware of the extra burden that tenure/promotion evaluations place upon faculty reviewers. Our profession and our institutions rely heavily on your evaluative role. Should you be able to take on this task, I would be very grateful for your service and scholarly contribution.

If you would be willing provide an evaluation, we will send you copies of all of Professor _____'s publications. As you review those materials, we would ask that you provide detailed, analytical comments on his / her scholarly work and its contribution to the advancement of the field. You need not review each publication individually, although you may certainly do so if you wish. The department is especially interested in knowing which of Professor 's works you believe is most important and why; how his / her scholarship compares to other scholars at similar stages in their careers; how you would assess the general trajectory of his /her research and publications; and whether you have any other insights into his/ her professional reputation. Because every institution is different, your evaluation should not include a discussion of whether the candidate would be recommended for tenure and/or promotion at your own institution.

Your letter would be treated as confidential and would not be available to the candidate, though it will be reviewed by the tenured faculty in the Department of _____, the Promotion and Tenure Committee of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of the College, and the University's Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Whether you accept or decline this request, I ask that you please let me know your decision at your earliest convenience. If you are willing to serve as an evaluator, we would ask to receive your evaluation, as well as a copy of your own C.V., sometime before _____. We deeply appreciate your willingness to assist us in these crucial deliberations. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 994- _____ or by email to _____@gwu.edu.

I very much hope that you will assist us and look forward to hearing from you.

With best regards,

Chair, Department of _____

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences

The George Washington University

Letter / Email 2: Once the Evaluator Has Accepted

Dear Professor _____

I am delighted that you are willing to provide an evaluation of the scholarly work of Professor _____ who is a candidate for (tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor or promotion to the rank of Professor) in our department. Enclosed are the scholarly materials in Professor _____'s dossier that we would like you to evaluate.

I invite you to be as specific and complete as you can reasonably be. This is not to suggest that we expect a detailed analysis of numerous publications -- although some evaluators choose to provide that -- but only that we find it particularly helpful to receive letters that address the following questions in some detail: What has been the candidate's contribution to his/her field? Is the person doing path-breaking research? Which are his/her major publications? Have her/his publications changed the way specialists in the field view their subjects, or are they likely to produce such a change? How would you assess the general trajectory of his /her research and publications (do you detect increasing maturity from earlier to later publications)? What is the nature of her/his professional reputation, if you know of it? How does the scholarship compare to that of other scholars at similar stages in their careers? In the end, is the work that the candidate presents of high quality, understanding that quality has to be defined multidimensionally.

Although we have asked you for an evaluation of the candidate's scholarship, we would also welcome any other comments you may wish to offer. For example, if you have dealt with him/her at conferences or on editorial boards, or if you have information about her/his other qualifications, we would be happy to learn what you have observed or know. It is not helpful to us to know whether or not this candidate would be or would not be tenured or promoted at your institution, as every institution is different.

I look forward to receiving your evaluation sometime before [deadline date]. We deeply appreciate your willingness to assist us in these crucial deliberations. As we need to provide the Dean with information about our evaluators, it would be very helpful if you could enclose with your letter of evaluation a copy of your own c.v.

With best regards,

Chair, Department of _____

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
The George Washington University

Appendix B

Check List for Promotion and Tenure Files

Candidate: _____

Before transmitting a recommendation to the Dean's office, please check to indicate that the dossier includes all of the following information and items that are relevant. Please create a subfolder for each set of documents as shown below.

1. Chair's Letter of Transmittal

- Report of department vote, including negative opinions;
- Discussion of candidate's scholarship/creative activity;
- Brief explanation of stature of evaluators, methods (and reasons) for selection;
- Discussion of critical assessments by the external evaluators;
- Sample copy of letter sent to evaluators;
- Discussion of evaluators' letters;
- Explanation of candidate's role in collaborative research/co-authored articles;
- Discussion of candidate's role in the department, and, as appropriate, college and university;
- Evaluation of teaching evaluations, compared to remainder of department.

2. Curriculum Vitae

- Educational history
- Employment history (at GW and elsewhere), including dates of hire, title, rank, and tenure history
- Scholarly or creative record, distinguishing books; chapters refereed articles/papers conference proceedings other articles; book reviews exhibitions/shows performances/concerts recordings presentation/participation at professional conferences other
- Service record, distinguishing departmental committees/offices, with years University committees/offices, with years professional organization boards/roles, with years List of master's, doctoral theses supervised
- Grant record: proposals submitted, agency, result, amount
- Awards/honors/other achievements

3. Teaching

- Teaching statement and reflection by candidate (no more than 3 pages). Should include plans for professional development.
- Summary of student course evaluation forms, including numerical scores, organized clearly by class/by semester, for prior 3-5 years
- Reports from colleagues' classroom observations, if available
- List of courses taught, the enrollment, whether graduate or undergraduate, and whether a new preparation or redesign was required
- Illustrative example from at least one course that lists learning objectives/outcomes and the topics, teaching approach, learning activities, and sample assessment of learning outcomes used
- Letters (if any) from graduate students supervised, undergraduate majors, etc.

4. Scholarship

- Letters of assessment (at least 5) from evaluators
- Research statement and reflection by candidate (no more than 3 pages). Should include plans for professional development.
- Section should also include sample letter to evaluators and summaries of their credentials (not CVs)
- Reviews of exhibitions/performances/concerts if relevant
- One or two copies of all the candidate's publications/works/slides/tapes, etc. – whatever provides the scholarly basis for recommending the candidate's promotion and/or tenure.

5. Departmental/University/External Service

- Service statement and reflection by candidate (no more than 3 pages). Should include plans for professional development
- Summary of the record of the candidate
- Special recognition of service (if any)

6. Procedural Matters

- Copy of your department/program's by-laws showing the procedures and requirements for tenure and/or promotion
- Statement certifying that all of the procedures and requirements have been followed in making the recommendation enclosed with the dossier