

OFFICE OF
THE PROVOST

To: UTEP Chairs, Program Directors, and Faculty
From: Senior Vice Provost, Ann Quiroz Gates, Ph.D.
Re: Tenure and Promotion Process 2021-2022

1. Introduction

The purpose of this memorandum is to circulate information intended to reinforce the criteria and procedures mandated by the [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures \(HoOP\)](#) for all recommendations of tenure and/or promotion. Dates and deadlines are provided on the [Provost's website](#).

2. Candidate's Dossier

A tenured faculty member serves as an asset for advancing the university's, college's/school's, and department's/program's mission and goals with the expectation of maintaining high professional standards. The case for granting tenure and/or promotion is made through a dossier and, as such, it should be focused on the candidate's qualifications and evidence of contributions in the areas of teaching; of research, scholarship, creative, or professional activity; and of service to the university, profession, and community. All three areas must be considered, but the relative weight attributed to any one area is dependent on the duties and assigned workload of the faculty member. For faculty who are involved in interdisciplinary work, it is imperative that they clearly document their contributions to the collaborative effort(s).

An outline of the major components of a dossier and suggested quality indicators can be found [here](#). If a department/program or a college/school has documented guidelines for preparing the dossier, it is incumbent on the chair or program director to inform the faculty. Faculty can include a [COVID Impact Statement](#), although the statement does not change standards for review, i.e., the quality indicators. The holistic review should be informed by evidence identifying how performance and productivity have been impacted. The standards and criteria for tenure and promotion are discussed in a later section of this document.

Granting tenure and promotion is a significant investment of the university. As stated in the HoOP §4.4.6.1.6:

A faculty member will not be granted tenure without a clear history of significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge in his or her discipline. The faculty member must also be judged to be likely to continue making such contributions for the rest of the career.

Thus, the faculty member must present a clear, complete, and evidence-based case for the argumentation of the candidate's contributions and future trajectory. The assessment must consider performance as documented in the dossier with consideration of the professional impact of COVID this past year, if any. The dossier may include the time period for approved leave; however, the reason should not be included.

3. The Review Process



Fig. 1. Levels of review at UTEP

The levels of review at the university are shown in Fig. 1. The external review and internal review processes and procedures are described next.

3.1 External Review

Letters from at least three¹ respected scholars, scientists, or other professionals are essential to the assessment of candidates for tenure and/or promotion. It is imperative that the reviewers are experts in the area of the faculty. Recommendations can come from faculty, the candidate for tenure and/or promotion, and external colleagues. However, not all letter writers should be recommended by the candidate. External reviewers must:

- be reputable scholars, scientists, or other professionals in the discipline,
- have never been closely associated with the candidate or the university,
- hold at least the rank for which the candidate is applying, and
- be employed by at least a peer or aspirant peer institution.

It is recommended that the chair or program director provide the dean with the list of reviewers with their short bio for approval. The chair is responsible for sending letters of request for review. Letters that only provide summaries of the record are significantly less useful than those that provide and explain the reviewer's assessment of the candidate's work. Therefore, in soliciting letters, chairs and program directors should draw attention to the evaluative nature of the review so that reviewers understand what the University is asking of them.

The [Templates for External Letters](#) provide guidance for: 1) the review request, and 2) the review criteria and other guidelines for those who accept the invitation review. Please note that the information that is bolded in the request template must be included in the letters. All other information and requests may be tailored to your discipline, departmental, program, or college/school standards.

3.2 Internal Reviews

The review committees must be composed of tenured faculty who hold at least the rank for which the candidate is applying. If the department/program or college/school has not codified the composition of the committee or how the chair is chosen, then the chair should appoint the committee and/or chair. The chair or program director should ensure that the committee recognizes their duty to use a fair and equitable process that includes review of the evidence. I strongly recommend that leadership and committee members read the [Best Practices Tool on Documenting the Impact of COVID-19 on Faculty](#) from Purdue's Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence. The article provides a perspective on the impact of COVID and presents the studies that show the negative impact of COVID on faculty, in particular on women and faculty of color due to disproportionate service roles and the emotional labor that they often assume.

¹ Chairs should consult with their deans regarding the number of letters set by the college.

Because of their discipline-specific knowledge and strong familiarity with the candidate, department colleagues have the opportunity to provide particularly rich evaluations which can serve as context for the entire process. For each area of contribution, the assessments, argumentation for the assessment, and evidence in support of the assessments (e.g., CV, teaching assessments, reference letters, and other supporting evidence) must be cited or included in the review memorandum. The argumentation in the memorandum must be soundly reasoned and supported by strong evidence. Evidence that might seem to undermine the conclusions reached, such as a contradictory reference letter, should be addressed in the memorandum. When there is significant disagreement among members of the departmental or college review committees, the opposing views should be presented for other levels of review to consider. While evidence is essential to support conclusions, care should be taken that summaries of accomplishments do not take the place of expert, meaningful evaluation of the work being summarized.

UTEP values interdisciplinary research and education, and its importance for advancing discovery, novel, and creative efforts. The assessments must consider interdisciplinary contributions as valid based on the evidence provided.

As described earlier, it is important that reviewers consider UTEP's mission during evaluation of dossier's and consider the alignment and contributions of the candidate with respect to the mission:

UTEP is a comprehensive public research university that is increasing access to excellent higher education. We advance discovery of public value and positively impact the health, culture, education, and economy of the community we serve.

4. Tenure and Promotion Standards & Criteria

The HoOP outlines the standards for promotions. It is important that the committees are aware of HoOP §4.4.6:

As the faculty of the University develops, the standard of performance for recommendation for promotion and tenure should change.

If a faculty member's accomplishments do not keep pace with the current standards of performance for promotion and tenure, that individual may not be awarded tenure or advanced in rank.

It is not appropriate to argue that a candidate be awarded tenure or promotion because he or she meets the performance standards that were previously in effect when others in that department may have received tenure or promotion.

Reviewers at all levels should explicitly cite the HoOP and any college or school standards and criteria, and articulate whether and how the candidate's record conforms to them. It is also important to ensure that standards are applied consistently.

For tenure standards and criteria, the review committees should reference the HoOP §4.4.6.1.3 – §4.4.6.1.6. It is important to note that research scholarship is broadly defined as inclusive of the Scholarship of Discovery, Integration, Application, Teaching, and Engagement. Minimum criteria for promotion to the various academic ranks are specified in §4.4.5.3. Please refer to the Tenure and Promotion Outline and Suggested Quality Indicators document found [here](#).

The granting of tenure and promotion to our faculty is one of the most important activities we do to support the UTEP mission, improve the culture of our departments and colleges, and ensure the success of our students for the future. As such, we are grateful for the time and effort you each put into this process. If you have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to contact me (agates@utep.edu) or Tami Keating (tlkeating@utep.edu).