

# Promotion and Tenure

## Promotion and Tenure Packets

For the official General Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure, please visit: <http://provost.utexas.edu/faculty-affairs/promotion-and-tenure/>

### Important Deadlines in the Promotion Process

The President's memo regarding promotion of faculty indicates some important deadlines in the timetable. These are intended to ensure the quality of the review process and to allow the departments ample time to assist the candidates with preparation of the required materials. Preparation of promotion dossiers requires significant staff assistance and is a team effort between the candidate and department chair, which is benefited by early consultation regarding the candidate's intentions and the department leadership's views. The Dean is asked to submit names of candidates wishing to be promoted in late spring; Those faculty who are going up early or for Full Professor may remove their names from consideration in Mid-July. Please consult the President's memo on the Provost's website for these dates: <http://provost.utexas.edu/faculty-affairs/promotion-and-tenure/>

Associate professors with tenure may be considered for promotion to professor during any year deemed appropriate by the budget council and department chair. Promotion before six years in rank have elapsed is considered early and should be explained.

Right of Consideration. As provided in HOP § 3.17, tenured associate professors with ten years or more in rank can invoke their right to be considered for promotion to professor. To invoke this right of consideration for a given promotion cycle, associate professors must advise their department chairs in writing by February 1. These cases will be considered at all levels unless a faculty member withdraws the case before the final vote of the budget council is taken. If promotion is not awarded, the right may be exercised again after five years of service.

Again, in both cases the process and the candidate's chances of success are served by early preparation. This particularly permits the scheduling of peer teaching observations in the spring semester and the identification of external reviewers.

### Budget Council and Chair Statements: Important Note for Department Evaluators

The university guidelines request an evaluation of the candidate's performance in the various areas of the dossier, a document provided on behalf of the Budget Council and signed by one of its members. In the past, candidates often crafted their own summary evaluation reports in these sections, providing bulleted lists that echoed the accomplishments contained in the vita. Some departments have continued with this style, even if the summary lists were submitted over the signature of a Budget Council member.

The appropriate style of these documents, however, is *evaluative*. The report should communicate the evaluation process: which activities and accomplishments are considered most significant, what criteria are taken into account in judging them, what are the norms of the department against which those criteria have been developed, what are the strengths and weaknesses within the area? The report should not be a comprehensive itemized list of everything the candidate did with no attempt to place the work in context. It should not look like it could have been written by the candidate.

The chair can help in preparing the document, but it is desirable for a senior Budget Council member to have a major hand in the writing. The chair will have an opportunity to write his or her own evaluative statement, and these Budget Council reports are an opportunity for another voice to be heard reflecting the workings of the senior leadership of the department. These reports will typically be prepared following the meeting at which the departmental vote is taken on promotion and will reflect the discussion that took place. Much of the information can be prepared beforehand, but the overall report should reflect and support the department-level outcome.

A reader should be able to get a sense of the department's culture, what it values, and how it makes determinations of excellence. A well-executed evaluation adds credibility to the department and its judgments by showing that the process has been taken seriously, submitting judgments backed by evidence. Uniformly positive evaluations, with no hint of critical weighing, harm the department's credibility and, as a result, its candidates for promotion.

The chair's evaluation letter should adopt a similar strategy: setting the context for the decision to support or not, reconciling any differences between the chair and the Budget Council, explaining differences of opinion among Budget Council members, and candidly acknowledging weaknesses in the record. For candidates the department supports, it is tempting to take the view that any admission of weakness in a case puts a chink in the armor and undermines chances for success. The opposite is more often the case. A transparent and candid letter, acknowledging the inevitable chinks, can be an even more effective communication of support.