

Promotion and/or Tenure Guidance

#10: Faculty Personnel Committee Review and Recommendation



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

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prepared by Kenneth M. Doxsee
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The University-level Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC) is an elected standing committee of the University of Oregon Senate. Membership on the FPC is restricted to tenured faculty at the rank of Associate Professor or Full Professor. Associate Professors serving on the FPC are empowered to participate fully in the review of all cases for promotion, including those for promotion to Full Professor.

The FPC is responsible for the final, independent written report and vote in the promotion and/or tenure process for every candidate for promotion and/or tenure. While the time commitment made by the members of the FPC is significant, the majority of their work takes place during the Winter term. Service on the FPC provides a unique opportunity to experience the University faculty's remarkable breadth of scholarship and creative practice, effective and engaging teaching approaches, service contributions, and, entwined with these, engagement with issues of equity and inclusion.

General FPC Guidelines

- Membership
 - Members are elected to two-year terms as part of the annual Spring term election cycle.
 - In a typical year, roughly half of the FPC will be members returning for their second year of service and half will be new members.
 - If a member is unable to participate for a prolonged period of time (*e.g.*, due to sabbatical leave), the UO Senate President will arrange for a replacement, choosing from the list of candidates for election that received votes, if appropriate candidates are available, or by a recruitment process. Such members are named to a one-year term; they are eligible to run for election to a subsequent two-year term.
 - At either the final meeting of the year or the first meeting of the next year, the FPC selects a member to serve as Chair. The Chair's primary responsibilities beyond those of other committee members are the identification of "scribes" for each case, filing reports and voting records with Academic Affairs, serving as the communication link between the committee and the Office of Academic Affairs, and coordinating the preparation of the committee's final report to the UO Senate, due by the first Senate meeting of the following academic year (generally held in October).
- Scheduling
 - A quorum of two-thirds of eligible members (*i.e.*, members who have not recused themselves or declared a conflict of interest) is required for a committee vote. It is essential for as many FPC members as possible to participate in the discussion of each case. Particularly during the very busy Winter term, this requires considerable flexibility in scheduling of meetings. To the extent possible, meetings are scheduled during "normal" working hours, but in some cases, the

conflicting schedules of twelve tenured faculty can necessitate meetings after 5:00 PM. As Academic Affairs works to schedule meetings, committee members are asked to distinguish those times that *cannot* work (*e.g.*, times during which the member is teaching a class) from those that the member would simply prefer to keep free, but for which no formal conflict exists. Note that catering is provided for meetings scheduled during meal times.

- Confidentiality
 - FPC discussions and votes are entirely confidential. Members of the FPC may communicate about specific cases only with each other and with the Vice Provost or Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or their assistants. Attempts by others to gain information about the FPC’s deliberations should be met with the simple statement, “I’m sorry, but I can’t speak with you about that.”
 - Following completion of a signed statement assuring treatment of all case files and materials with the utmost of confidentiality, FPC members may access digital versions of the primary files. The supplementary files are maintained in the Office of Academic Affairs; FPC members may access these materials during regular working hours and, with prior arrangement, at other times.
- Communications
 - E-mail communications among committee members are limited to the scheduling of meetings at which specific cases will be discussed and the recruitment of “scribes” for individual cases. Drafts of FPC reports are *never* circulated by e-mail, but instead are provided to committee members either in print form or on a shared, confidential network drive.
 - The Chair of the FPC may request additional information on behalf of the committee, addressing any such requests to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, who will determine whether to approach the appropriate Dean. Please note that requests to provide additional information or clarifications to the file after it leaves the department can contribute significant stress and anxiety to an already emotionally-charged process. Attempt to distinguish between things that could make a real difference in the evaluation of the case and those that might merely be interesting to know.
- Conflict of Interest
 - If a member of the FPC is in the same department as the candidate, he or she is **required to recuse** himself or herself from the case at the level of the FPC, avoiding any attendance at committee meetings or participation in formal or informal committee discussions or votes. Participation in discussions and voting at the departmental level are both acceptable and encouraged.
 - In addition to recusal from cases involving departmental colleagues, an FPC member may occasionally need to declare a conflict of interest for a particular case. Official conflicts include considerations of one’s partner or other family members, close personal friends or business partners, recent co-authors of publications, and recent co-principal investigators on funded activities. Unofficial conflicts can arise in cases where, for sound reasons (*e.g.*, friendship that doesn’t reach the level of an official conflict, personal animosities), the FPC member feels he or

she cannot offer an objective and unbiased analysis of the case. A committee member with a declared conflict should not attend committee meetings or participate in committee discussions or votes about the case.

The general guidance provided earlier for the school- or college-level Personnel Committee is fully relevant to the University-level FPC and is reproduced below, with minor modifications as appropriate.

- Committee members may develop their own preferred approach to reading and evaluating dossiers. There is great value in beginning with the candidate’s CV, then working downward in the file, through the candidate’s statement, the waiver letter, *etc.*, thereby allowing development of a personal opinion about the strengths of the case and any potential issues of concern prior to being influenced by the opinions of other reviewers or review committees. Next, study the external reviews, noting their potential endorsement or rejection of your perceptions and any additional observations of strengths or weaknesses. Finally, sequentially examine the reports and recommendations provided by the Department Committee, the Department Head, the school- or college-level Personnel Committee, and the Dean, evaluating them in the context of your independent appraisal of the case.
- The FPC should review, evaluate, and critically discuss the full file, including the external evaluations, the materials contained in the supplementary file, and each of the internal reports and recommendations. The committee’s conclusions need not coincide with the recommendation of the Department Head, the Department Committee, the school- or college-level Personnel Committee, or the Dean. The committee’s report should objectively and honestly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and should represent analysis, not advocacy.
- It is neither necessary nor desirable to duplicate material presented by the earlier internal reports. Rather, provide *additional* insights that help to interpret the file, particularly in cases of conflicting opinions among the external reviewers, department faculty, the Department Head, the school- or college-level Personnel Committee, or the Dean.
 - *While the FPC report should include some discussion of the candidate’s record of scholarship, teaching, and service, including the candidate’s discussion of contributions to equity and inclusion, it may be viewed as something more akin to an “executive summary” rather than a comprehensive overview.*
 - *As the Provost will have access to the entire dossier, the FPC report should represent a more focused document that adds any new committee observations regarding strengths and weaknesses and that captures the nature and nuance of the committee’s discussion.*
- The FPC of necessity brings a “generalist” analysis to the case, as committee members will typically not be specialists in the candidate’s area of scholarship. Thus, the committee will to some extent be “reviewing the reviews,” but the committee is both expected and empowered to go beyond that, contributing their own impartial and objective analysis of the case. Include a critical appraisal of the department- and school- or college-level analyses and recommendations. Are they convincing? Were important elements – either supporting or arguing against the awarding of tenure and/or promotion – disregarded or misrepresented? As appropriate, bring this critical appraisal to an

analysis of each of the key components of the earlier internal reviews. Throughout the process, review the candidate's record in the context of expectations as presented in the approved departmental promotion criteria statement.

- Do the external reviewers appear to represent an appropriate and balanced group of experts?
- Have any discrepancies or contradictory opinions within the external reviewers' letters been addressed in a forthright fashion, or have comments from an "outlier" reviewer been neglected simply because they are not consistent with other comments received? Could the "outlier" be identifying real and critical issues in the case – whether in support of or arguing against the awarding of tenure and/or promotion – that were missed by the other reviewers?
- Has the candidate's scholarship record been fully and properly evaluated in the appropriate context, including evaluations of the quality and impact of the journals or venues in which work has appeared?
- Is the candidate's record of intramural and extramural grant or fellowship support appropriate, and has it been appropriately discussed?
- Is the candidate's teaching record appropriately discussed, or are there issues that were understated or underappreciated, including possible discrepancies between student and peer evaluations?
- Have the candidate's teaching and service portfolios been appropriately reviewed and evaluated?
- Have the candidate's contributions to equity and inclusion been adequately reviewed and discussed? The University broadly interprets institutional equity and inclusion.
 - Contributions may address a wide range of equity and inclusion issues.
 - These contributions may be made through scholarship, teaching, and/or service.
 - Activities are relevant whether carried out at the UO or externally – *e.g.*, within academic or professional associations, non-profit, governmental, and/or private sector organizations.
 - Impacts may be at the individual level (work with individual students, faculty, community members, or organizations), programmatic level (establishment or provision of leadership to a formalized program), or institutional level (strengthening of institutional policy or practice toward equity and inclusion).
- Have signed written comments submitted by students been appropriately reviewed and considered. *It is **not** permissible to quote from **unsigned** evaluations in any summary or evaluation statements associated with the review.*

Following their discussion, each member of the FPC (unless recused or having a declared conflict of interest) casts a vote of Strong Yes, Yes, Weak Yes, or No based on his or her personal feeling regarding the strength of the case. The committee may determine the procedure by which votes are cast; recent committees have used a "card" system, with each member revealing his or her vote simultaneously by

presenting a color-coded vote card. These votes are recorded on a separate vote record sheet which does **not** become part of the permanent dossier; only the final vote tally is reported in the FPC report. There is no expectation of unanimity in the vote, and a spread of votes is not uncommon. The vote tally will only be revealed to a candidate if he or she requests access to that portion of the dossier allowed by the candidate's waiver status; with rare exceptions, such requests come only from unsuccessful candidates for promotion and/or tenure. The University feels it is critical to avoid revelation of the details of the vote – while the nature of the vote of course varies from case to case, each of our successful candidates for promotion and/or tenure is and needs to feel equally valued and respected.

Following conclusion of the discussion and completion of the voting record and FPC report, the Chair of the FPC provides the record and report to the Office of Academic Affairs, which then finalizes the dossier and presents it to the Provost for final analysis and decision.