

# Tenure and Promotion Processes

July 2021

UNL policies and procedures related to evaluations of faculty for promotion and/or tenure are described within the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Faculty* (hereafter, *Guidelines*: <https://executivevc.unl.edu/faculty/evaluation-recognition/guidelines>). The following document describes implementation of these policies and procedures within the College of Arts and Sciences. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between the two documents, the *Guidelines* take priority.

*Notes:* Except where noted, the portions of this document that describe promotion are relevant to tenure-line, practice, and research faculty. The title “unit director” is used to represent both chairs and directors; “unit” is used to describe departments or centers that host faculty appointments.

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## Promotion vs. tenure

Evaluations for promotion and tenure are distinct. As detailed in the following sections, the evaluations employ different standards. When the processes are conducted in parallel, separate recommendations or votes on the questions of promotion and tenure must be conducted at each level of evaluation.

In all but unusual circumstances, promotion of tenure eligible faculty to the rank of associate professor takes place at the same time or before the tenure decision. However, since the decision regarding tenure is based upon broader criteria, the two actions separate decisions. While it is assumed that a faculty member who has earned tenure should also have earned promotion to associate professor, promotion in rank carries no guarantee regarding granting of tenure . (*Guidelines*)

However, the evaluations also have similarities.

- Both types of evaluation are conducted on the basis of a submitted file which includes external reviews. When conducted within the same cycle, evaluations for promotion and tenure will be conducted in parallel and employ the same file, including the same set of external reviews.
- Both processes involve a series of reviews/evaluations beginning with a unit faculty review committee and ending up with the Chancellor. At each level of evaluation, the report of the evaluating body is added to the file prior to the next evaluation.
- At each level of evaluation, the candidate may submit a formal response to the recommendation and may request reconsideration of a negative decision (see Response/Reconsideration, below).

## Evaluation for promotion: summary

- Nominations are submitted to the unit director or to the designated unit committee, depending on the unit bylaws.
- Promotion is based upon achievement. Standards can be found within the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Faculty* (referenced above), the *CAS College Handbook* ([https://cas.unl.edu/docs/College\\_Handbook\\_v1\\_3252021.pdf](https://cas.unl.edu/docs/College_Handbook_v1_3252021.pdf)), and the *CAS Professor of Practice Guidelines* (<https://cas.unl.edu/professors-practice-guidelines>).
- Time-in-rank as a tenure-track assistant professor is normally six years (*Guidelines*). College guidelines suggest six years in rank is also typical for an Assistant Professor of Practice. Earlier promotion is quite unusual and implies that a candidate has accomplished in the shorter time period what normally would be expected in the longer one.
  - Research faculty should discuss promotion timelines with the research supervisor, the unit director, and/or the Associate Dean for Faculty.
- Candidates may request at any time that their file be withdrawn from further consideration. Such requests will be honored without prejudicing future attempts to secure promotion.

## Evaluation for tenure: summary

- At the time a faculty member is proposed for initial appointment to a Specific Term position, the tenure notification date is established in the tenure track letter of offer. The

tenure notification date may only be altered by a formal approval process involving endorsements from the College and the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor:

<https://executivevc.unl.edu/faculty/pre-tenure-extensions>.

- Faculty in a pretenure appointment during the 2020-2021 academic year may request a one year extension of the tenure notification date based upon impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The same is true for AY 2021-2022.
- For a new faculty member without credit for prior experience, the *Guidelines* state that the review process would normally begin in the fall term of the sixth year of appointment (VI.D.2.). Refusal to be considered at the mandatory time is equivalent to resignation no later than at the end of the probationary period.
- The tenure review process must be initiated in time to allow completion before the tenure notification date. As noted later in this document, waiver completion, reviewer selection and other processes must begin well in advance of the formal review.
- The awarding of tenure before the mandatory time may be considered for the truly exceptional person. Early tenure implies that a candidate has exceeded in the shorter time period the type of sustained high level of performance that would be expected over the normal probationary period. Failure to be awarded tenure after early nomination will not prejudice later consideration. At any point in the process, candidates for early tenure may request that their nomination be withdrawn from further consideration. Such requests will be honored without prejudicing their consideration for tenure in the future.
- Evaluations for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor are nearly always conducted simultaneously.

## Deadline considerations (promotion and/or tenure)

Files for evaluations involving tenure (including consideration of both promotion and tenure) are generally due to the College in late October; those for promotion (not involving tenure) are generally due in early January. Unit directors must schedule all processes controlled by the unit such that promotion and/or tenure processes can fully be completed by the College and University deadlines.

- The necessary time considerations are detailed in the following sections.
- In the case of jointly appointed faculty, the two units must conduct evaluations in series. As a result, the two units must coordinate their planning to achieve timely evaluation and submission of files.
- Evaluation schedules must build in time for candidate response and for possible reconsideration of a negative evaluations.

## Putting together the file

- The file is assembled online within the “RPT” system, available at <https://cas-rpt.unl.edu/>. (If you are off-campus, connect via VPN. For a description of what should be uploaded into the system, see: <https://cas.unl.edu/p-t-candidate-file-preparation>.)
- The RPT system is also used for reappointment evaluations and existing file components may be reused or updated.

- Units need to ensure that candidates have adequate mentoring on what is needed in the file, which components are to be provided by the candidate, and the deadlines for when the candidate needs to submit file components to the unit. (College deadlines are described later in this document).
- Original electronic versions of documents (as opposed to scanned hard copies) should be used whenever possible. Any exceptions require advance permission from the Associate Dean of Faculty.
- It is the responsibility of the unit director to ensure that all relevant documents and materials have been included in the file.
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## Peer evaluation of teaching

- Units initiate the peer evaluation of teaching process.
- A minimum of two peer evaluations must be included in both tenure and promotion files.
- Peer evaluations can occur at any time during the tenure candidate's probationary period or since the promotion candidate's last promotion but should be completed prior to the semester in which the file will be submitted.
- See the [CAS statement on analysis of teaching](#), which includes a discussion of peer evaluation.

## External reviewers

- The College requires a minimum of four external reviews, at least three of whom must be fully promoted faculty and from institutions classified as Carnegie *Very High Research Activity* ("R1"). More information about selection of external reviewers can be found at [cas.unl.edu/docs/CAS\\_Policy\\_on\\_External\\_Reviews\\_May2021.pdf](https://cas.unl.edu/docs/CAS_Policy_on_External_Reviews_May2021.pdf).
  - Practice and research faculty may generally include fully promoted faculty in practice or research ranks, respectively. Contact the AD-F for more detail.
- Prior to any discussion of reviewers, candidates should decide what rights will be retained with regards to external reviews and complete the waiver form at: <https://executivevc.unl.edu/faculty/forms/P-T-waiver-form-102721.pdf>. The completed form should be shared with the unit director or the committee coordinating the review. Candidates are welcome to consult with a mentor or senior colleague during this process.
- Regardless of the choice(s) on the waiver form, candidates may always suggest names of possible external reviewers and/or object to the possible inclusion of other reviewers. The extent of further involvement in reviewer selection is dependent upon the choices submitted on the waiver.
- The unit director must seek approval of potential reviewers from the Associate Dean for Faculty. In the spring or early summer, unit directors should submit a list that includes information about the prospective reviewer (name, rank, department, university), whether the suggestion came from the candidate or the unit/program, and, to the degree possible given the waiver, the extent to which the candidate knows the reviewer. If any of the external reviewers is not fully promoted or is not at a university categorized as Carnegie Very High Research Activity ("R1"); check at

<http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/lookup/lookup.php>), then justification must be provided for inclusion on the list. Expect the Dean's Office to take several business days to respond.

- Units should ensure that the process of selecting and recruiting external reviewers is conducted on a schedule that will allow a candidate's file to be considered within College and campus deadlines. Experience has shown that it is useful to initiate the external review process during the spring semester prior to the academic year in which the candidate's file will be considered.
- Reviews are solicited by the unit and not by the candidate. Letters soliciting reviews must inform potential reviewers of the extent to which review contents and authors will be known to the candidate.
- See [cas.unl.edu/docs/CAS\\_Policy\\_on\\_External\\_Reviews\\_May2021.pdf](http://cas.unl.edu/docs/CAS_Policy_on_External_Reviews_May2021.pdf) for more information regarding deadlines and external reviewers.

## Faculty review committee consideration

- The constitution of the review committee depends upon the nature of the evaluation: tenure only, tenure and promotion, or promotion. Consult with unit bylaws and the *EVC Guidelines* if there are questions about the electorate.
- The members of the committee must be provided sufficient time, usually at least one week, to review the file in advance of a meeting to consider the question(s) of promotion and/or tenure.
- After the meeting, the person or persons responsible for drafting the committee letter needs time both to draft the evaluation in the form of a letter and to seek feedback and approval from the committee members. If the letter contains wording that might identify reviewers, a redacted version must be prepared to provide the level of confidentiality required by the candidate's waiver.
- The final version of the letter, or a redacted form if necessary to protect reviewer identity, must be shared with the candidate.
- The candidate has up to five (5) working days after receiving the letter to respond to the decision and may request reconsideration of a negative decision. If a reconsideration is requested, the faculty committee must have time to decide upon this request, and, assuming a reconsideration is granted, to hold another evaluation meeting and prepare a revised or annotated version of the evaluation letter. The revised letter must be shared with the candidate, who has up to five (5) days to write a response to the final version. The reconsideration process must be completed so as to comply with deadlines for submission of the evaluation to the next level of consideration. No negative recommendation shall be forwarded until the-reconsideration is complete.
- The final version of the letter, along with any redacted version, are then loaded into the College RPT system. Candidates will have access only to the redacted versions.

## Evaluation by unit director

- The unit director needs time to review the candidate's entire file and to write a letter to the Dean making an independent recommendation with clearly stated assessments of the candidate's performance that explain his or her recommendation.

- A copy of the letter is given to the candidate, who has five (5) working days to respond and, if desired, request a reconsideration. If the original letter identifies reviewers or contains wording that might identify reviewers, a redacted version must be prepared to achieve the confidentiality required by the candidate's waiver. The College RPT system allows uploading of both unredacted and redacted versions; candidates will have access only to the redacted versions.
- If a reconsideration is requested, the unit director needs time to reconsider the recommendation and to write a second and final transmittal letter to the Dean with his or her recommendation. No negative recommendation shall be forwarded until a requested reconsideration is complete. A copy is given to the candidate, who has up to five (5) days to submit a response for inclusion in the file.
- The final version of the letter, along with any redacted version, are then loaded into the College RPT system; candidates will have access only to the redacted versions.

## Evaluation of jointly appointed faculty

If candidates are jointly appointed, the evaluation processes summarized above are initially conducted in the jointly appointing unit (the unit in which the faculty member has the lower level of appointment). The resulting evaluations are then sent to the primary or tenure home unit (the unit in which the faculty member has the higher level of appointment). Non-home unit faculty and unit director go through the process outlined above before the file is sent to the tenure home unit for consideration.

- The evaluation by the faculty review committee in the home unit must consider the reviews submitted from the non-home unit. As a result, the time required for "unit level" review is at least doubled relative to a faculty member appointed in only one unit.
- Candidates must be given the same five (5) working daytime period to respond to the recommendations made by the faculty and the unit director and to any new material included in the file.
- Chairs should consider the extra review time required for jointly appointed faculty members when planning promotion and/or tenure reviews.

## Deadlines

The complete file must be loaded through the online system (<https://cas-rpt.unl.edu/>) by deadlines posted. These deadlines, typically at end of October for decisions involving tenure and in early January for decisions involving only promotion, will be updated each year at <https://cas.unl.edu/due-dates-faculty-reappointment>. Contact the Dean's Office if you have any difficulties with submission.

## Right to response and/or reconsideration

If at any point in the process, the candidate is not recommended for promotion or tenure by either the appropriate faculty committee or the responsible administrator, the candidate may request reasons for the adverse recommendation and may also request reconsideration of the decision. The reconsideration process must be completed so as to comply with submission deadlines to the next level of consideration. The purpose of a statement of reasons is to give an

unsuccessful candidate an opportunity to prepare a rebuttal argument. No negative recommendation shall be forwarded until the-reconsideration is complete. (*Guidelines*, Section V.D.7)

## Promotion and/or tenure – detailed steps

### Overview.

Unit deadlines must provide adequate opportunity for due process in the consideration of a candidate's file, including time to initiate and consider reconsiderations and appeals of negative recommendations. In setting unit deadlines and schedules, unit directors should keep in mind that files associated with evaluation for tenure, or for tenure coupled with promotion, are typically due at the Dean's Office by the end of October; files associated with promotion (not involving tenure) are usually due in very early January. Updated deadlines will be posted each year at <https://cas.unl.edu/due-dates-faculty-reappointment>.

- Unit directors must work together to set coordinated schedules and deadlines for evaluations of jointly appointed candidates.
- Withdrawal of a submitted file is possible except for consideration of tenure by the tenure effective date.

### Candidate and unit Responsibilities

Candidates and units both have responsibilities for preparing the files supporting their nominations. See <https://cas.unl.edu/p-t-candidate-file-preparation>.

- The building of a candidate's file should begin when the letter of offer is signed and materials are collected and analyzed for a probationary faculty member's first annual performance review and first reappointment. At each stage of reappointment, the file should be updated with previous annual evaluations and reappointments.
- Units are responsible for a number of portions of the candidate's file, see: <https://cas.unl.edu/p-t-candidate-file-preparation>
- Unit administrators and the Dean's Office are responsible for advising candidates on the form and contents of their files.
- Files must be organized to comply with instructions from the EVC and the Dean's Office. Please see <https://cas.unl.edu/p-t-candidate-file-preparation> for file organization.
- The identity of authors of student-submitted evaluations should remain protected unless students have chosen to reveal their identity as part of the evaluation. The candidate's level of access to external reviews is determined by the nature of the waiver signed. With the exception of these constraints, candidates are entitled to have access to all the materials in a file and to know the identity of everyone who has been granted access to the file.
- With the exception of student evaluations and external reviewers protected by the terms of the candidate's waiver, new material may not be introduced into the file unless the candidate has been given five (5) working days to respond to the possible inclusion of new material. The presiding official decides whether to include the new material after receiving the candidate's response (or after the five-day period has elapsed if no response is received).

## Unit Consideration

### Faculty Committee(s)

1. Nominations are first considered within the candidate's unit(s) by the faculty review committee(s), defined as the faculty members capable of conducting the evaluation on the basis of their rank, credentials, and experience. The process of constituting such committees must be established at the time of the apportionment or reapportionment of a candidate's responsibilities. These processes are normally laid out in the unit bylaws. If the candidate has a joint appointment, the initial set of evaluations will be conducted in the non-home unit (the unit in which the faculty member has a small net appointment).
  - a. *Promotion*: Units are organized in different ways to review nominations. The most common approach involves a review committee comprised of all faculty who hold the rank equal to or higher than that to which a candidate aspires.
  - b. *Tenure*: Nominations are normally first considered by a committee of the candidate's unit (units if the candidate has a joint appointment). The committee must be composed of faculty in the unit who are tenured.
2. The unit director of the candidate's unit shall not vote, but normally participates in the unit's deliberations.
  - a. Each unit shall have rules determining the unit director's role. Regardless of what that role is, the unit director must have the opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss its recommendation. The discussions at unit meetings should be free, candid, and based only on the material in the candidate's file.
3. The decision and vote on whether to recommend the candidate for promotion and/or tenure must be transmitted in writing to the candidate as a copy of a letter addressed to the unit director.
  - a. The letter must include the vote on promotion and/or tenure and a performance assessment of all areas of the candidate's apportionment (teaching, research, service, administration, and/or outreach) using the categories from the A&S Handbook: outstanding, superior, good, adequate, and inadequate.
  - b. The letter must clearly describe the reasons for each recommendation to give the candidate an opportunity to prepare rebuttal arguments (if a majority of faculty vote against promotion or tenure) or to comment on assessments of the record and on faculty votes (if the majority faculty vote is positive). In particular, a reason for negative votes should be provided.
4. Upon receipt of the copy of the review committee's transmittal letter, the candidate has five (5) working days in which to:
  - a. Review and comment on the faculty's performance assessments and on the faculty's vote if the majority of faculty voted to recommend promotion or tenure; or
  - b. Request a reconsideration and, if the recommendation is negative, to submit a rebuttal argument. Such requests must be granted as expeditiously as possible and the reconsideration must be completed in time to comply with the submission deadline to the next level of review. No negative recommendation from the review committee shall be forwarded to the unit director until the reconsideration is complete. Candidates may attend the reconsideration meeting to argue their case and to answer questions but must leave before any vote(s) is taken. A

decision to not attend a reconsideration meeting may not be used against the candidate.

5. After completing the process described above, the review committee letter is uploaded to the file for the next level of review.
  - a. The candidate is provided with a copy of the final letter. If the final letter contains any substantive changes from the original, the candidate has up to five days to submit a comment or rebuttal for inclusion in the file.
  - b. The candidate cannot ask for a second reconsideration from the faculty committee.

### Unit Director

6. The unit director will review the candidate's file, including the evaluation from the faculty committee, and make an independent recommendation on promotion and/or tenure.
  - a. This recommendation must be transmitted in writing to the candidate and must use the evaluative terms in the A&S Handbook (outstanding, superior, good, adequate, inadequate).
  - b. The letter, addressed to the Dean, must clearly specify the rationale for the recommendation(s) so that a candidate who has received an adverse recommendation can prepare a rebuttal argument. The candidate has five (5) working days in which to:
    - 1) Review and comment on the unit director's performance assessments the recommendation(s) are positive.
    - 2) If any of the recommendations are negative, to submit a rebuttal and ask for a reconsideration. The reconsideration must be completed as expeditiously as possible and in time to comply with the submission deadline to the next level of review. No negative recommendation from the unit director shall be forwarded to the College until the reconsideration is complete.
7. After this process is completed, the unit director places the letter in the file.
  - a. A copy of the letter is given to the candidate, who has the right to write a rebuttal that will be placed in the file (but does not have the right to a second reconsideration from the unit director).
  - b. If the candidate has a joint appointment, the activities described in this section are now repeated in the unit with the higher fraction of appointment.
8. The file is now submitted to the Dean's Office.

### College Consideration

9. The Dean's Office examines the file to make sure it is complete.
10. The A&S Promotion and Tenure Committee meets to review the file in order to make a recommendation to the Dean.
  - a. The Dean, or a designated alternate such as the Associate Dean for Faculty, may participate in the Promotion and Tenure Committee's deliberations and may discuss its recommendations with the committee but does not vote with the committee.

- b. All discussions should be free and candid and must be based on material in the file.
  - c. The purpose of the Promotion and Tenure Committee's review is to ensure that proper standards are being applied in the College and that the standards have been appropriately applied to the candidate. The committee's recommendation, vote, and a synopsis of the discussion assessing the candidate's record using the terms from the A&S Handbook will be transmitted in writing to the candidate and the candidate's unit director(s).
    - 1) If a majority of the committee votes in favor of promotion and/or tenure, the candidate has five (5) working days upon receipt of the transmittal to review and comment on the committee's performance assessment and its vote.
    - 2) If the recommendation is negative, the candidate has five (5) working days upon receipt of the transmittal to ask the committee to reconsider its recommendation and to draft a rebuttal argument using the synopsis of the committee discussion. This rebuttal will be put in the candidate's file. The candidate or the candidate's representatives (chosen by the candidate) may, at the candidate's request, attend a meeting with the College Promotion and Tenure Committee to make an argument on behalf of the candidate and to answer questions. The candidate or representatives will then be asked to leave the room and the Promotion and Tenure Committee will reconsider its decision and take a new vote. The committee will conduct the reconsideration as expeditiously as possible to meet the deadline for submission to the next level.
    - 3) A copy of the letter is given to the candidate, who has the right to write a rebuttal that will be placed in the file (but does not have the right to a second reconsideration from the committee).
    - 4) After the completion of Promotion and Tenure Committee deliberations, including any reconsideration of an initial negative decision, the committee sends a letter to the Dean reporting its assessments and vote(s).
11. The Dean reviews the candidate's entire record to ensure that the College is applying proper standards and that they have been appropriately applied to the candidate. Based on this review, the Dean writes an independent recommendation and assessment in a letter to the EVC and sends copies of the letter to the candidate, the candidate's unit director(s), and the College Promotion and Tenure Committee (via the Associate Dean for Faculty).
- a. If the Dean's recommendation is positive, the candidate has five (5) working days in which to review and comment on the Dean's assessment of the record and on the Dean's recommendation.
12. If the Dean's recommendation is negative, the Dean must inform the candidate in writing that the candidate has five (5) working days upon receipt of the Dean's letter in which to ask for a reconsideration and to submit rebuttal arguments. The letter must clearly specify the Dean's reasons for an adverse recommendation in order to give the candidate an opportunity to prepare a rebuttal argument. If requested, the candidate or the candidate's representatives (chosen by the candidate) can meet with the Dean as part of the reconsideration process. The reconsideration must be completed as expeditiously as possible and in time to comply with the deadline for submission of the

file to the EVC. After completion of the Dean's deliberations, including any reconsideration of an initial negative decision, the Dean places the letter in the candidate's file.

### Whether the file moves to the EVC

- *Evaluation of promotion file:* If either the College Promotion and Tenure Committee or the Dean recommend promotion, the file must be forwarded to the EVC for consideration. If the College Promotion and Tenure Committee and the Dean concur in a recommendation *against* promotion, the promotion process ends. Candidates and their unit(s) each have a right to appeal the decision of the College to the EVC. Candidates and their unit director(s) receive a copy of the Dean's letter to the EVC that informs them of these appellate rights.
- *Evaluation of tenure:* All tenure nominations must be forwarded to the EVC, regardless of decisions at the College level.

### Consideration by the Executive Vice Chancellor and/or Chancellor

The EVC reviews the file, including recommendations from the College and the unit(s), and makes an independent recommendation to the Chancellor. Details regarding this process are described in the [Guidelines for Evaluation of Faculty](#).