Best Practices for Units Developing
TENURE & PROMOTION GUIDELINES/STANDARDS
FOR TENURE TRACK FACULTY

The best tenure and promotion guidelines/standards for tenure-track faculty at UNLV articulate clear unit expectations and processes, reflect consistent unit procedures and practices, and observe confidentiality. Summarized as the three “C’s” (clarity, consistency, and confidentiality), the topics below are not required, nor are they limiting, but they are endorsed as best practice. Created after the American Council of Education’s Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation: Advice for Tenure Faculty, Department Chairs, and Academic Administrators, this document provides direction in creating guidelines and standards that are thoughtful, inclusive, and fair.

1. **Clarity**

Clearly written procedures formalize unit processes and ensure that all candidates receive the same information, advice, and preparation about the tenure and promotion (T&P) process. Unit guidelines should define faculty roles, discuss process oversight, and highlight any distinctions in expectations, process, or procedure by: discipline, role, year of hire, etc. Such detail enhances transparency about the tenure and promotion process for both candidates and evaluators. Identified below are four common areas in unit bylaws/guidelines/standards where improvements in clarity are recommended. Where appropriate, examples are provided to aid units embarking on this effort.

a. **General Definitions**

**Faculty Roles**
- **Expectations** – Explain the responsibilities and expectations of faculty having different ranks (assistant, associate, full), roles (teaching intensive, research intensive, administrative duties, hybrid), and duties specific to programs/disciplines. Include a discussion on any differences in responsibilities across roles or programs/disciplines and how these differences impact the evaluation of the candidate.

**Process**
- **Eligibility (The Probationary Period)** - Explain how eligibility to apply for tenure and/or promotion is determined during the probationary period – by hire date, offer letter (e.g., years of service, award of tenure), etc.
- **Evaluation Committee** – State the composition of the committee (eligibility to serve, program/discipline representation, etc.) and the voting process.
- **Criteria for Promotion** – Describe the major criteria for which a candidate will be evaluated upon.
- **Evaluation Metrics for Criteria** – Describe the metrics used to evaluate the criteria.
• **Internal Procedures** – Provide a brief discussion about the roles, responsibilities, and actions of the candidate, department chair/director, and the evaluation committee.

Below are a few examples from the UNLV University Libraries, the School of Life Sciences, and the Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education.

The concept of effectiveness as a librarian comprehends a wide variety of individual abilities and achievements. In order to be effective, the Library Faculty as a whole must successfully develop, organize, manage, interpret, and promote access to a full range of library services and resources. Although every librarian must be able to demonstrate a general appreciation and understanding of all of the above, expectations of individual effectiveness may vary depending upon their functional specialization within the Libraries. Many job descriptions combine activities from more than one functional category, e.g., a government documents librarian may exercise selection, acquisition, cataloging, reference, and management responsibilities. In this context, it is important to note that some librarians may have opportunities for direct contact with students and other academic faculty, while others, most notably technical services librarians, may interact more frequently with library faculty colleagues and/or counterparts at other institutions. Annual evaluations of librarians’ performances are provided by supervisors according to specific job descriptions, stated goals and Guidelines for Equitable Performance Ratings in Scholarship and Service.

*Effectiveness in the Practice of Librarianship/Teaching, UNLV University Libraries Bylaws*

Tenure-track faculty have a base expectation of 9 course credits per semester. Tenure-track faculty may obtain reductions to the 9 credit expectation based upon:

- Organized research activity comprised of one or more of the following: record of publications (with consideration of journal impact factors), external funding record, citation rates, and presentations at scientific conferences
- Mentoring of graduate and undergraduate students with documentation of undergraduate research activities.
- Large course enrollment, defined as greater than 50 students in a course lecture section.
- Course work with high demand activities involving a particularly high number of student contact hours or student writing assignments.
- Special teaching-related activities such as new course development or complete redesign of lab or course lecture materials.
- Development and offering of graduate courses that are recognized as time intensive.
- Particularly high service activities (e.g., chairing institutional committees with large time commitments.)
- Directing a university-based center.
- Intensive professional service activities associated with scientific societies or public outreach and community service activities.

*Expectations for Tenure-Track Faculty, School of Life Sciences Bylaws*
b. CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION & METRICS FOR EVALUATION

Unit standards/guidelines should state the major criteria for tenure and/or promotion, and specify the key elements for which the evaluation will rely. Doing so enables evaluators to apply the criteria directly to the candidate’s dossier. For example, candidates for tenure/promotion can be evaluated:

- By performance (e.g., excellence, commendable, satisfactory, etc.) in specific categories
- By predetermined benchmarks in specific duties and responsibilities
- By significance/impact of performed duties, achievements, activities, and honors

The criteria for promotion should illustrate higher expectations of candidates from rank to rank. Below are two examples:

Specific Requirements for the Award of Tenure in the William S. Boyd School of Law

The School expects its faculty to make high quality contributions to all areas of its mission. In this regard, there are three specific areas in which the candidate must demonstrate that he or she has achieved a level of achievement in order to obtain an award of tenure. These are:

1. The candidate must demonstrate at least a satisfactory level of achievement in each of scholarship, teaching and service.
2. The candidate must also demonstrate excellence in either scholarship or teaching.
3. The candidate must demonstrate that the level of achievement shown in the pre-tenure years will be sustained for the remainder of the candidate’s professional career.
Specific Standard for Scholarship (Tenure and Promotion)

The scholarly mission of the School is critically important. Excellent scholarship requires a major commitment of time, effort, skill and intellect. In seeking to cultivate this level of commitment, however, the law school neither seeks nor wishes to impose a unitary model of scholarship. Effective legal scholars use a vast array of methodologies, have diverse agendas, work in widely different fields of law and appeal to broad and different audiences.

The Boyd School of Law recognizes this diversity and embraces it. In the evaluation of a candidate’s scholarship, the faculty acknowledges that no single scholarly form is superior to others. Due to this fact, evaluation of scholarship often requires external as well as internal review. To inform the faculty’s judgment on scholarship, the evaluation of the candidate’s development and execution of a research agenda will be aided by other legal scholars who may be more familiar with the candidate’s methodologies and performance. Although these external opinions will normally receive substantial weight in the evaluation of the candidate’s scholarship, they will not be determinative or conclusive; the faculty retains the independent right and ability to form its own conclusions about the quality of the scholarship and the candidate’s promise for future scholarship.

As a consequence, the School imposes few formal restrictions on the form in which scholarship appears. Most legal scholarship currently appears in student-edited law journals, but publication in such journals is not necessary to the determinations of promotion or tenure. Illustrations of other possible forms of scholarship may include:

- a.) books, including monographs, law texts or treatises, and casebooks or book chapters with substantial intellectual content;
- b.) articles in peer-reviewed legal or academic periodicals, journals and reviews; or
- c.) book reviews or essays of significant length and scope, and containing substantial intellectual content.

The faculty will evaluate scholarship as excellent if, as a body, the candidate’s scholarship:

(i) Evidences substantial or creative intellectual endeavor;

(ii) Manifests an important and useful contribution to the study of law or its application; and

(iii) Provides a basis for a conclusion that the candidate will probably continue publishing scholarship of similar or better quality for the remainder of the candidate’s professional career.

- Substantive Standards and Procedural Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure,
  William S. Boyd School of Law
Promotion Guidelines: Assistant to Associate Professor  
Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education (EPHE)

UNLV faculty members are evaluated on a four-point scale of excellent, commendable, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. The minimum evaluation standard for performance from assistant to associate professor, according to UNLV Code, is a record of excellence in either teaching or scholarship and at least satisfactory in the other. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate a minimum of satisfactory record in service. For the category of Teaching, EPHE provides the following guidelines for evaluation:

The guidelines for excellent include but are not limited to:
- Peer evaluation of excellence based on observation and review of course materials.
- Consistent record of strong positive student evaluations throughout the probationary period.
- Evaluation of syllabi, examinations, student projects, and other teaching materials suggests consistent implementation of quality learning environments.
- Evidence of leadership in development and implementation of new courses, extensive revision of existing courses, or development of new department program.
- Consistent pattern of successful mentoring of graduate students in preparation of scholarly products through chairing and/or serving on committees.
- Evidence of mentoring Graduate students toward refereed publication and/or national presentations.

The guidelines for commendable include but are not limited to:
- Peer evaluation of at least commendable based on observation and review of course materials.
- Consistent record of positive student evaluations by the end of the probationary period.
- Evaluation of syllabi, examinations, student projects, and other teaching materials suggests that progress is being made toward the successful implementation of quality learning environments.
- Evidence of mentoring of graduate students in preparation of scholarly products through chairing and/or serving on committees.
- Consistent evidence of ability to and interest in utilizing a variety of teaching strategies.
- Evidence of mentoring Graduate students toward presentation proposal submission to national conferences.

The guidelines for satisfactory include but are not limited to:
- Peer evaluation of at least satisfactory based on observation and review of course materials.
- Efforts to keep abreast of new knowledge and the incorporation of that knowledge into student learning experiences are evident.
- Participation on theses and dissertations committees.

C. EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT MEET CRITERIA

Provide examples of activities, achievements, and/or performance standards that meet the listed criteria. Such a list serves as a reference for candidates-- the list is not intended to be exhaustive or limiting, and language stating as much is recommended. Below are examples from the William F. Harrah Hospitality College, the College of Urban Affairs, and the School of Allied Health Sciences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Student evaluations consistently above college mean</td>
<td>- Classroom instruction (syllabi, course material, assessment of student learning, teaching load, student evaluations, peer evaluations)</td>
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<td>- Annual assessment report form program assessment plan</td>
<td>- Curriculum, course, and program development (course planning, developing, improving, or revising course content, materials, and methods, introducing innovative new courses, developing online courses and material, industry immersion, integration of global and sustainability examples)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Portfolio or summary of teaching</td>
<td>- Teaching awards (university, college, industry, student organization, or other similar awards)</td>
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<td>- Advising, mentoring, or serving as a member of thesis or dissertation for graduate faculty, or supervision of non-graduate faculty</td>
<td>- Graduate student development (chair of doctoral/master’s thesis committee, service on master’s/doctoral committees, supervising graduate student research projects, publications/awards/ and conference presentations under faculty supervision)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Evidence of modeling the reflective teaching process</td>
<td>- Undergraduate student development (honors thesis supervision/committee member, supervising undergraduate student research projects, publications/awards/conference presentations under faculty supervision)</td>
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<td>- Professional development in faculty’s area of teaching</td>
<td>- Supplemental instruction (student advising, conducting help sessions, teaching and working with students outside regular classroom periods, coordinators of multi-section classes and labs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Other (organizing or participating in conferences/workshops related to the scholarship of teaching and learning, publications in pedagogic articles/manuals/textbooks, professional certification)</td>
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**Indicators of Significance of the Work**

**Greenspun College of Urban Affairs Guidelines**

Indicators of quality and significance may include (but are not limited by or to) the following factors:

**I. Research**

- Significance of the specialized assignment within the candidate’s unit and/or the university
- Significance of the specialized assignment within the candidate’s professional and/or academic area of expertise
- Curriculum/program development, accreditation.
- Administrative/fiscal management.
- External awards or recognition of distinguished administration/specialized assignment activities from honorary, learned, and/or professional societies.
- Internal awards for excellence --university awards are given the most weight, followed by college awards and then departmental awards.
II. Teaching

- External awards for teaching from honorary/learned/professional societies.
- Internal awards for teaching excellence–university awards are given the most weight, followed by college awards and then departmental awards.
- Teaching/training grants and contracts [competitive awards will be given more weight than non-competitive awards]
- Refereed publications on teaching pedagogy.
- A consistent record of innovative and effective teaching that is validated by multiple peer-reviews.
- Publication of textbooks that are adopted by other universities.
- Major technological innovations/developments in teaching related activities.
- Significant curriculum development, including the development of multiple classes for graduate and undergraduate concentrations within a departmental or multi-disciplinary program.
- Consistent evidence from standardized tests of substantial learning gains by students in multiple course offerings.
- A substantial record of student mentoring as indicated by extensive supervision of undergraduate students in independent studies, practicums, and internships.
- Chairing multiple M.A. and Ph.D. committees beyond departmental or college norms.
- Multiple instances of co-authoring of published scholarly work with current and recent students.
- Keynote addresses and other substantial presentations on teaching pedagogy at honorary/learned/professional societies.

III. Service

- External awards of distinguished service from honorary, learned, and/or professional societies.
- Internal awards for excellence in service–university awards are given the most weight, followed by college awards and then departmental awards.
- Writing grants that help support the unit’s teaching or service missions
- University-based service activities:
  - Major administrative appointments (e.g., graduate or undergraduate coordinator, basic course director, debate/forensics coach).
  - Chairing university, college, and departmental committees.
  - Active participation as a member of multiple committees at all levels
  - Individual service initiatives that benefit the University (e.g., writing accreditation reports).
- Professional service activities:
  - Membership on editorial boards and other review bodies.
  - Reviews of textbooks and manuscripts for professional journals.
  - Organization of professional conferences.
  - Elected positions or appointments to leadership positions in professional organizations.
  - Individual service initiatives that benefit the profession (e.g., workshop coordinators).
- Community service activities:
  - Appointments to leadership positions within community-based organizations.
  - Active participation in multiple collaborative partnerships between the university and community organizations.
  - Individual service initiatives that benefit the community (e.g., service training, outreach).

-College of Urban Affairs Tenure, Promotion, and Merit Guidelines, Appendix A: Indicators of the Significance (Quality and Impact) of the Work
Appendix: School of Allied Health Sciences Bylaws.

The following table provides examples of evidence that candidates could use to support their application for promotion or tenure. ‘High value evidence’ items would be given more weight in candidate evaluation than ‘Medium value evidence’ or ‘Lower value evidence’ items. ‘Medium value evidence’ and ‘Lower value evidence’ items would still be seen as positive but would be seen to serve a supportive role to ‘High value evidence’ items, particularly when making determinations of excellence in any area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarship</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High value evidence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed publications</td>
<td>Continuous publication record, some as first or senior author. Authorship of peer-reviewed data based and review articles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication quality and impact</td>
<td>Since these criteria may vary by field and discipline, it is incumbent upon the candidate to clearly describe the quality and impact of their publications. These items are a list of examples for how a candidate could define the quality and impact of a publication and are not required for each publication: Impact factor, Journal acceptance rate, Citation numbers (Google Scholar, SCOPUS, etc.) H index, Media coverage, Documented influence in field, ResearchGate for the number of views and downloads, Other alt-metrics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants and contracts</td>
<td>Grants and contract submission numbers (external &gt; internal; PI and Co-PI &gt; Co-I); Evidence of a developing trajectory culminating in submissions to external agencies Funded projects (external &gt; internal; PI and Co-PI &gt; Co-I); Mission-critical investigator roles on funded team research projects; Grant scores; Feedback from reviewers; GA or student support – full or part time support; Student participation – student worker, student co-author</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Keynote or invited international presentations; Invited scientific lectures at outside institutions; Presenting or senior authorship on oral abstract presentations at national/international meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patents/Intellectual Property</td>
<td>Develop Intellectual Property (IP); Work with appropriate University staff to seek patents and/or license agreements to advance IP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Author; contributing author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>Scholarly recognition awards (e.g. travel awards, abstract awards, etc.) from professional societies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medium value evidence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed publications</td>
<td>Publications as middle author; Invited editorials or commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and contracts</td>
<td>Local foundation without indirect money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book chapters, Educational Materials</td>
<td>Author; contributing author</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lower value evidence</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants and contracts</td>
<td>Internal awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations, peer reviewed</td>
<td>Poster presentations; oral presentations as middle author</td>
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d. INSTRUCTIONS ON MATERIALS TO INCLUDE IN DOSSIER

Advise candidates of the types of materials to include in his/her dossier (commonly listed dossier materials are presented below). Here are other questions to consider:

- Should the contents of the dossier be presented in a specific order? If so, advise the candidate accordingly.
- If external letters are required, what is the process to solicit letters? Below are resources to reference within unit bylaws that may assist candidates and reviewers:
  - Candidates: Best practices: Selecting external referees
  - Unit leaders/reviewers: Templates for writing solicitation letters
    - First contact -- general
    - Formal solicitation – Tenure
    - Formal solicitation – Promotion

Common dossier materials:

- Completed application form
- Candidate waiver form
- Cover sheet for external referees
- Solicitation letters sent to external referees
- Returned external referee letters
- Past annual evaluations
- Mid-tenure evaluation
- Department/unit tenure and/or promotion committee evaluation (if applicable)
- Department chair/unit director evaluation (if applicable)
- College/school tenure and/or promotion committee evaluation
- Dean evaluation
- Department/unit standards for tenure and/or promotion (if applicable)
- College/school standards for tenure and/or promotion
  - Schwartz, D. (2019). Tenure and Promotion Forum: Mid-tenure, Tenure, & Promotion. Presentation at the Office for Faculty Affairs workshop on Tenure and Promotion, UNLV.
2. **Consistency**

Unit procedures should be consistently executed from year to year. When describing your unit’s internal procedures, include details about each of the processes below to formalize unit practices and ensure that all faculty in the unit receive the same information.

**Initiating the promotion process**
- Does the faculty member announce his/her interest to apply for promotion? Or is the faculty member notified by the unit leader of eligibility to apply?

**Submitting the dossier**
- What materials should be submitted for review?
- What criteria should be used to select external reviewers?
- Is there an internal (departmental) submission date or window?
- Who should the dossier be submitted to?

**Evaluation of the dossier**
- Who will evaluate the dossier (e.g., Personnel Committee, P&T Committee)?
- Which faculty in the unit are eligible to vote on tenure and/or promotion applications?
- What is the selection process for committee members?

**Notification of decision**
- What is the timeline for review and recommendation?
- Who will communicate the decision to the candidate?

**Denial or appeal process**
- Explain the university’s denial and/or appeal process, inclusive of deadlines, candidate review/rejoinder, and timelines
- What happens if a candidate’s request for promotion is denied?
  - Are reasons for the denial explained in writing?
  - Are recommendations to improve the candidate’s dossier presentation provided? Are suggestions to improve the candidate’s performance within specific criteria provided?
  - Can the candidate reapply for promotion the following year? If not, when?

**Disseminating Campus Resources**
- Every faculty member has the right to exercise policies that protect his/her pursuit of tenure and/or promotion. In lieu of having faculty learn about such policies by informal means, unit guidelines/standards should reference governing bylaws.
(e.g., NSHE bylaws, UNLV Bylaws) and campus policies, and when applicable, offer instruction. Below is a sample listing of campus resources to reference:

- Tenure Flexibility Policy
- Denial/appeal process (UNLV Bylaws, Chapter 16, Sections 16.8-9)
- Leave (Sick, Family Medical Leave Act, Jury Duty, and Military Duty)
- NSHE bylaws
- UNLV Bylaws

3. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Highlighted below are key phases within the T&P process where confidentiality must be maintained. Units are advised to include statements on confidentiality within the unit bylaws/guidelines/standards, and when appropriate, to reference online resources. See the example below from the School of Architecture.

- **What phases of the T&P process are confidential?** All aspects of the T&P process are confidential— the identity of the candidates, the identity of members of the evaluation/review committee, as well as all discussions, documents, and supporting materials. No information can be released to the public.

- **What are the responsibilities of committee participants?** All Personnel/Tenure and Promotion committee members must abide by the following:
  - All deliberations and related work products are confidential
  - The committee chair is the only person permitted to report on the evaluation process to parties outside the committee (e.g., department chair/director, dean)
  - All committee members must sign a [Confidentiality Acknowledgement Agreement](#)

- **Can the candidate interact with the committee?** Yes, but with limitations. The candidate can interact with the committee chair (and vice versa): to answer questions, to notify the committee of huge achievements to include in dossier, etc. However, the candidate cannot inquire about the committee’s deliberations or decision.

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The School Faculty Personnel/Promotion and Tenure Committee shall review individual candidate’s applications. The committee membership shall be known to the candidate, but its confidential report shall be discussed only with the Director. The final report shall be an evaluation of the candidate’s record on all three categories of teaching, scholarship, and service. After fully explaining the evaluation based on the candidate’s application materials, the report shall end with a recommendation to either grant or deny promotion and/or tenure.

*Policies and Procedures, School of Architecture Bylaws, Ch. III, Sec. 5*
RESOURCES & REFERENCES

A repository of UNLV college and department tenure and promotion standards can be found on the Faculty Affairs website: https://www.unlv.edu/provost/promotion-tenure

- Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education. Bylaws. UNLV, 2017.
- School of Architecture. Bylaws. UNLV.
- School of Life Sciences. Rules and Bylaws. UNLV, 2018.
- Schwartz, D. Tenure and Promotion Forum: Mid-tenure, Tenure, & Promotion. Presentation at the Office for Faculty Affairs workshop on Tenure and Promotion. UNLV, 2019.