

Promotion & Tenure: Guidelines for Faculty

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1. Introduction

This manual is a resource that provides guidelines for faculty preparing for promotion and tenure (P&T). These guidelines were collected by the UD ADVANCE¹ leadership team during annual P&T panels.² Panelists have included recently promoted faculty, department chairs, and members of departmental, college, and university P&T committees. Panelists have represented a diversity of departments, research fields, and perspectives from all Colleges.

[Section 4.4 of the Faculty Handbook](#) covers many aspects of UD's faculty P&T process. Additional information can be found in departmental and college documents, which are posted on [the provost's website](#). This manual supplements these official documents. The first four sections overview some general steps in the P&T process, intended for associate or assistant professors. The concluding section includes specific guidelines for tenured faculty seeking promotion to full professor. Process-related questions should be directed to your department chair or to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs' Office.

2. Preparing for the P&T Process

Applying for promotion is an involved process so it's important to start early. Here are some tips for getting started:

- Familiarize yourself with University, Departmental, and College P&T documents, located in the Faculty Handbook (henceforth Handbook) and on the Provost's website.
 - Be conscious of the temporary Covid-related P&T policies (Handbook, [§4.4.18](#)).
 - Review the various policies with your chair, mentor(s), and/or other colleagues.
- Familiarize yourself with timelines.
 - The Handbook deadline to notify your chair that you intend to go up for promotion is April 30th. However, some departmental documents have an earlier deadline. Check with your department on which date you should use.

¹ Originally funded by an NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award, the UD ADVANCE Institute has as its broad goal diversifying and strengthening University of Delaware's faculty.

² The CT Caucus offers panels and resources for CT faculty promotion and the Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning (CTAL) offers panels to assist aspects of promotion surrounding teaching.

- Materials for external letter writers are often due well before you submit your full dossier. Find out from your department when you will need to have these materials ready. The earlier your materials are ready, the better – as this will give your committee more time to solicit letters.
- Your work will be evaluated largely on impact. Since impact can be measured in different ways, make sure you know the standards, metrics, and culture within your own department (grants, books, referred articles, citation numbers, impact factors, Google Scholar metrics, etc.).
- Learn as much as you can from others.
 - Seek out samples of recent successful dossiers. To see how different people demonstrate impact or present teaching materials, it can help to see samples from different departments or fields. Many faculty are willing to share their dossier – just ask.
 - Take advantage of university-sponsored events and resources ([UD ADVANCE Panels & web resources](#), CT Caucus and CTAL panels, etc.).
- Maintain an updated list (paper or electronic) of your accomplishments to serve as an aid for preparing your promotion dossier, peer review materials, and annual appraisal forms.
- External evaluations are critical to a successful P&T review. (See §4 (below) for more on this topic). Make your work known to potential letter writers early and often. You can be publicly visible in your field in ways that don't violate ethical concerns. For example:
 - Introduce yourself to top people in your field at conferences.
 - Organize conference sessions or symposia.
 - Invite senior colleagues from other universities to give seminars at UD.
 - Share your work with senior colleagues; tell them how their work influenced your way of thinking.
- Internal evaluation is also very important. Build bridges with senior colleagues. Make sure they know you and are familiar with your work.
- Make the most of 2- and 4-year peer reviews. These provide a platform for establishing standards and for seeking out areas that may need to be addressed.

3. Dossiers and Candidate Statements

When evaluators review your dossier, the key things they will be looking for are *impact* and the overall trajectory of your work: What is the influence and value of your work to your department, college, university and profession? How will you continue to grow after promotion? Your candidate statements are your opportunity to narrate who you are as a scholar and articulate the significance and innovation of your work. Whether written as separate documents or as a single long document, all faculty must include statements indicating their impact in the areas of teaching, research, and service. These statements should take the form a narrative that best tells your story. Identify your “brand” and weave it into all aspects of your dossier: Who are you as a scholar? A teacher? A member of the University community?

Here are some more specific tips:

- [Handbook §4.4.11](#) describes the required elements of a UD promotion dossier. Note, however, that departmental documents or practices may not perfectly align with the Handbook's recommended table of contents. Consult with your department if you have questions.

- Candidates are required to describe their workload in their dossier ([Handbook §4.4.5](#)). If your workload hasn't changed over the years this can be a sentence. If your workload has varied from year to year, your workload statement might be longer or include a table. The department chairperson's evaluation letter must also describe your workload ([Handbook §4.4.6](#)). Take steps to ensure the two statements are aligned.
- If you took a tenure extension (e.g., stop the clock), you don't have to explain why. Just make note that you took the extension.
- You have the right to add to your dossier after it has been submitted³. This is only appropriate if something has changed since the last review stage (e.g., a new grant or publication came in).
- Make your dossier and statements as reader friendly as possible.
 - Your statements (research, teaching, and service) should be brief and to the point. Use the sample dossiers you have collected as a guideline.
 - Use phrases that draw your reader's attention to key points ("This research is important because..." or "My innovations in teaching include...").
 - Use graphs, charts, or tables to enhance your story.
 - Use bullet points to highlight key accomplishments and to break up the text.
 - Refer to more detailed information in appendices or elsewhere.
 - If your work is interdisciplinary, describe it in your statements so that reviewers understand it as an integrated whole.
- Keep your audience in mind. The P&T committees above the department may not know culture of your discipline.
 - Tell them which metrics and standards are appropriate for measuring impact in your discipline.
 - However you choose to articulate the impact of your work, contextualize it by explaining the significance of awards, publications, invited talks, etc.
 - Avoid technical jargon; write in a way that is understandable to faculty outside of your field.
 - Don't assume that your reviewers know the level of work that goes into service responsibilities, teaching development, or other types of work. When appropriate, clarify the level of work in your statement(s).
- Do not make your case controversial by inadvertently raising unanswered questions or doubt raisers. For example:
 - Ensure that the information provided is accurate and that there are no inconsistencies.
 - Be clear about whether talks and papers are invited or blind-reviewed, etc.
 - Be clear about your level of contribution on co-authored works, collaborative grants, or projects. Speak with people in your department about what type of documentation might be expected.
- Don't be shy about describing your accomplishments, but avoid superlatives ("best," "only," etc.) unless you are sure that they apply.
- Address gaps, deficiencies, or other possible doubt raisers head on.
- For assistant professors, two- and four-year reviews are a required component of the dossier. If

³ You must request that it be done on your behalf. Contact the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs' Office for more information.

applicable, in your candidate statement refer to questions that came up in the reviews and how you addressed them.

- If you are using a different methodology or theoretical approach than most in your department or field, make your case. Explain why your approach and your work is important and impactful.
- The teaching section of your dossier can cover a broad range of teaching activities and can use a number of different ways to measure excellence (rather than focusing solely on numerical ratings from student evaluations of teaching). See [§4.4.11 of the Faculty Handbook](#) for more details. [CTAL](#) is an excellent campus resource for teaching development and P&T preparation.
- Your mentorship of students is another way to speak to your impact. How have you been helping students succeed? How has your research stimulated new research from your students? Provide a list of the professional placement of your students.
- Show how you have developed as a teacher over time and changed course as needed. Committees are looking for progress and improvement. You don't have to be perfect.
- Service needs to demonstrate that you are a good citizen. It should make you visible to others in your department/college/university.
- Service can also be a way to demonstrate impact.

4. External Letter Writers

External letters are a critical element of the review process. The Handbook ([§4.4.12](#)) describes the process by which external letter writers are chosen. As an overview, a candidate provides the departmental P&T committee with a list of potential letter writers. Some departments additionally require an explanation of why each person would be a good fit to evaluate their work. The department generates a list of additional names. The candidate has the right to comment on the department's list, but it is the department that makes the final decision on who will be asked to write letters. Your department may have more specific guidelines with respect to this process. Talk to your department if you have questions.

Below are some specific suggestions related to external letter writers:

- Department documents sometimes specify the number of letters required. However, college norms might differ from what is specified in department documents. Ask your department what is expected.
- In many departments, the letter writers serve as an external measure of the impact of one's research and often do not see a candidate's teaching and service materials. Find out from your department what materials are sent to letter writers as well as the deadline by for sending these materials.
- It is useful to have letter writers from top ranking institutions, but pedigree is not all that matters. Letter writers should be selected from faculty at well-respected institutions who are widely recognized as experts in their field and who can speak to the impact of your work. Reviewers provide their own CV, which should be proof of their expertise in the field.
- The Handbook indicates that reviewers must have rank at or above the rank being pursued. Do your best to err in the direction of full professors.
- Consider people who know your work, but don't have an association with you that may disqualify

them. Committees like to see letters that say, “I’ve never actually met Dr. X, but I’ve seen her speak at conferences and she would be tenured at my institution.”

- If your work is interdisciplinary or novel, you may not be able to find reviewers exactly in your field. If so, try to find people who can appreciate and comment on your work as an integrated whole. Be sure to address this point in your dossier as well.
- Avoid listing multiple people from the same institution as potential letter writers.

5. For Associate Professors

In many ways, the P&T standards and processes are similar for assistant professors seeking tenure and promotion to associate professor and for tenured faculty seeking promotion to full professor. But there are also some ways in which the path to full professor is unique. Below are some guidelines specific to tenured associate professors seeking promotion to full professor.

- A lot of this promotion is about demonstrating that you are a leader in your field – a scholar with national or international prominence. To establish this level of prominence, consider the following.
 - Be professionally active in ways that allow you to secure a network of international colleagues.
 - Take on leadership roles in professional organizations, become a journal editor, etc.
- If you have had an administrative leadership role (associate chair, grad director, etc.), tell the committees the level of work/commitment associated with this role. They may not know.
- Think of your path from assistant to associate to full professor as one big journey, not two separate journeys. Do your best to avoid stopping in between.
- Is there a “too late” to go up for promotion? Continued productivity does not mean that all years at rank have to be stellar, just ensure that the lull is explained and emphasize that you are back on track. Support the latter with evidence of an upward trajectory in excellence and productivity.
- Either way, take the time you need to establish a clear, sensible, well documented case. But don’t delay unnecessarily.
- While it is true that if you are denied, you can go up again, be mindful of the effects this might have on the process of securing strong letters from external reviewers.
- Post-tenure reviews can be a way of getting feedback on your dossier and your readiness for promotion. If you have not had a post-tenure review, get feedback from senior colleagues, your chair, or consider asking for a peer review at least a year before you go up for promotion.
 - If you get a negative peer review, take the feedback seriously and address it. That said, committee memberships change and there are many levels of evaluation above the departmental P&T committee. Ultimately you are the one who knows best when you are ready.
 - Note: There is no requirement that post-tenure reviews be included in dossiers for faculty seeking promotion to full professor.