

Judd A. and Marjorie Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences
Summary of Procedures
The Ad Hoc Review in Tenure Cases
2021-2022

Please note that pages 1-2 of this document are a summary of the “Ad Hoc Committee Guidelines and Procedures” that appear below (pp. 3-6). The WCAS Standards for Tenure appear on p. 10; sample request letters from the Dean to external referees and student letter writers appear on pp. 7-9.

Faculty Folio RPT

Beginning in fall 2020, each ad hoc committee will be able to review its candidate’s dossier in the online case management system, Faculty Folio RPT (Retention, Promotion, and Tenure). Each committee member will be granted “Committee Member” status within Faculty Folio – this status grants reading and downloading capability. A step-by-step tutorial for Committee Members is available on the Weinberg College “[RPT System Tutorial for Committee Members](#)” web page. A video tutorial for Committee Members is also available toward the bottom of the [RPT Faculty Folio webpage](#). Questions/concerns about this system may be directed to Elizabeth Kim, Assistant Dean for Faculty Advancement (7-0578; email: weinberg_assistdeanfacultyadvancement@northwestern.edu).

Timeline and required actions

The committee chairperson should call the committee together promptly to review the files. If anything is missing or inadequate (for example, explanation of candidate’s work, suggested list of external referees), please notify Elizabeth Kim, (7-0578; email: weinberg_assistdeanfacultyadvancement@northwestern.edu) at once so that she can request additional materials from the department.

Within 7-10 days of receiving the dossier, please send the Dean’s Office (to the email address above) a list of referees (at least an initial set) and the candidate’s field as it should be specified in the letter. We now tell departments to star the crucial referees. The ad hoc committee is asked to take into account the department’s request but will make the final determination of which external referees are invited to write. It is imperative that we get the letters out quickly. Referees should be affiliated with top-rated schools (based on NRC rankings, for example). In unusual circumstances, owing to the specialized nature of a discipline or subfield, some top referees may be at less stellar schools; care should be taken to explain the choice of such persons.

Ad hoc committees should try to come up with the names of additional referees over and above those supplied by the department. If you need help coming up with names of referees or their addresses, the Dean’s Office can help.

Special urgency: when a candidate’s major work (especially a book) is unpublished or has just appeared, it may be necessary to request that some referees undertake to read much material with which they are unfamiliar. These referees must be lined up promptly, before they are overwhelmed with like requests from other schools.

Ad Hoc Report

The ad hoc committee report is a crucial element in the promotion review, especially since its members read the referees’ letters in an unedited form, an advantage not accorded the department. It is essential that the report

- analyze the letters and other materials to make a case for why a candidate has or has not met the high standards for promotion;
- demonstrate that the committee canvassed a strong set of referees who are not all in the candidate’s narrowly defined subfield;
- evaluate carefully the candidate’s record as an educator;
- indicate both strengths and weaknesses of the case as reflected in the materials, but especially the letters from external evaluators. It is especially important not to gloss over negative comments in the letters. The committee should thoughtfully consider all such views and present a detailed analysis of such opinions in the report.

Ad Hoc Vote

Each member of the ad hoc committee votes YES or NO. If the committee wishes to use a scale of its own to indicate the strength of its assessments, it may do so, as long as the meaning of its scale is spelled out clearly. If there are doubts about the excellence of the work, the appropriate vote is no. The report should indicate how many members (but not who) voted at each level of enthusiasm.

Ad hoc committee reports are generally requested in early February to allow sufficient time for departments to review them and to respond if a recommendation is split, equivocal, or negative.

The Dean may at any time in the process request additional information or further analysis from the ad hoc committee.

Weinberg College Dean's Office
August 2021

To: Members of Confidential Ad Hoc Committees
From: Adrian Randolph, Dean

The paragraphs below are intended to describe some guidelines and official procedures regarding the review for tenure. The guidelines are suggestions, intended to help orient colleagues in performing their work. They have been generated by colleagues over the years and help steer colleagues who may be new to the process. The section on “procedures” defines the official procedures that define our process. These are regulations as opposed to advice or guidelines.

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

I. Role of the Confidential Ad Hoc Committee

The report of the ad hoc committee is a vital part of the promotion review. The Committee on Tenure, the Dean, and the Provost all rely on the report for a thorough discussion of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses as a teacher-scholar, their standing in and contributions to the field, and whether the candidate meets the standards for promotion. It should discuss the nature of the candidate's most important work, address the likelihood of the candidate continuing to make truly exceptional contributions, and include some discussion of the breadth of the candidate's influence. The opinions of specific referees should be discussed in the body of the report, but the report must be more than a synopsis of referee opinion. The best reports present the committee's collective deliberations and conclusions. The committee must convey through synopsis the opinions of specific referees, using these as the basis for a description of the committee's collective deliberations. All members should sign the report before delivering it to the Dean – either handwritten or e-signatures are acceptable.

II. Standards

Tenure. A recommendation of tenure implies the claim that the candidate in question constitutes as good a permanent appointment in their area as the College is capable of making, now or in the foreseeable future. Such a judgment must be based both on the candidate's accomplishments to date and on the evidence that informs expectations about future achievement. Tenure is not awarded for competent service, solid research, and adequate teaching. (See Enclosure 5 for the full statement of standards from the *Chairperson's Handbook*.)

The committee evaluates first and foremost the work completed during the probationary period at Northwestern or at a peer institution. Earlier accomplishments that have enduring influence on the field should also be highlighted but the candidate's potential for intellectual leadership rests on their independent scholarship.

In its appointments to tenure, the College aims at the superlative. Apart from the fundamentally important activities of meeting classes and doing research, a faculty member will influence students in many other ways, will play a considerable role in the work of colleagues, and will affect the directions in which the institution develops. From a different perspective, the dollars that are committed to a faculty member who makes their career at Northwestern can be spent in no other way. We cannot afford to compromise the highest standards.

Please note that some candidates for tenure have been granted an extension of the probationary term. Because extensions are intended to compensate for external factors that take time away from scholarship (illness, parenthood, e.g.) such candidates should be held to the same standards as those without extensions and not to some higher threshold.

Teaching, research and citizenship. The quality of a candidate's teaching and their potential as a teacher are major factors affecting the decision to promote. Teaching is defined broadly; it means not simply the ability to lecture, but also the faculty member's role vis-à-vis undergraduates and graduate students in various contexts, from lecture halls and seminars to independent study and advising. Mentoring of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (if relevant) is of course a highly significant part of teaching, as it involves nothing less than the preparation of the next generation's intellectual leaders, both within and beyond the academy. An institution devoted to instruction must weigh the quality of teaching in all decisions regarding its faculty. There is no simple formula for good teaching, but effective instructors are often described in terms of imagination, high standards, conscientiousness, clarity, a feel for what is important and original, and respect for students. This may be seen in classroom style, course development, and guidance provided to TAs. Improvement in quality of instruction during a faculty member's years here should be taken into account, as should the ability to engage students actively rather than just to impart information.

Excellent teaching and excellent research are not opposed alternatives. Northwestern's standing as a university permits it to require excellence in both.

Candidates are also evaluated with respect to their research and creative achievement. In most cases, this takes the form of activity that results in publication. In areas such as art, analogous forms of professional achievement can readily be identified. While the quantity of a candidate's completed work must be considered, the ad hoc committee is asked, above all, to assess its quality and its influence on the field.

In addition, the quantity and quality of achievement must be regarded as evidence for the degree of commitment to, and mastery of, a field of knowledge, as well as for the quality of the candidate's mind. On this basis one can venture inferences about future professional accomplishments.

The university depends on the good citizenship and service of its faculty members. Note should be taken of a candidate's participation in various activities relating to governance of the academic community.

III. Procedures

Confidentiality. Identities of ad hoc committee members are confidential, known only to each other and the Dean. Please do not reveal your role to other colleagues or to external referees. In order to preserve the anonymity of the committee's members, the Dean corresponds on its behalf with the candidate's department and with external and student referees. Identities of all referees are likewise held in confidence. If you need additional information from a referee, please ask Elizabeth Kim, the Assistant Dean for Faculty Advancement, to make the request for you.

First Meeting. The chair of the committee promptly calls the other members to meet and discuss external referees, the description of the candidate's field, and other matters related to the case.

Materials. Each member of an ad hoc committee will have on-line access (via Faculty Folio RPT) to the department letter, external letters collected by the department, candidate's CV, statement, teaching materials, course evaluations, articles, etc. Books (if applicable) will be delivered to each member's departmental mailbox.

- If the committee needs to know more about a candidate's research, service, or teaching and advising, the Dean's Office will forward the request promptly to the department.
- If the department letter is insufficiently informative, the committee can request amplification.
- If the committee judges the referees to be insufficiently strong, it can ask the department to provide other names.

Recommendation to withdraw. Normally, the confidential ad hoc committee advises on the strength of a candidate for promotion. For candidates who are not in their year of mandatory consideration for tenure, however, the committee has the further option of advising that the candidate's department consider postponing its recommendation to a later year. If, in the committee's view, the evidence suggests *prima facie* that this latter course may be appropriate, the committee should bring that possibility to the Dean's attention in the fall before soliciting letters from faculty referees.

Soliciting letters from external referees

Timing. Please give Elizabeth Kim the go-ahead to line up referees within 7-10 days of receiving access to the file. The sooner letters to referees go out, the more likely a committee is to get an adequate response, especially from the more distinguished referees. When the candidate's promotion hinges on an unpublished manuscript, the urgency becomes acute. The Dean's Office attempts to get all letters out before Winter break, hoping to get responses by the end of January. (See "Mechanics," below.)

Selecting external referees. The committee should select referees from among those named by the department and generate names of additional referees on its own. We now allow departments to flag the most essential referees. The ad hoc committees is asked to take into account the department's request but will make the final determination of which external referees are invited to write. Many ad hoc committees give less weight to letters that the department has received simply because of the lower level of confidentiality. Letters sent directly to the Dean will not be discounted on the basis that some were identified by the department.

In recent years, many committees have collected so many letters that the Central Administration has deemed them to be excessive. In the absence of special conditions – e.g., the candidate works in two fields, mixed letters at the departmental level, contradictory information in the file – the committee should try to restrict the number of letters to eight per candidate. The committee should prioritize referees so that the Dean's Office can quickly poll a second wave of referees if those in the initial set decline. Of course, the numbers of potential referees who will need to be invited to write will be larger than eight. Although referees should be close enough to the candidate's work to be competent

judges, they should not all be from the same narrowly defined subfield as the candidate. Most of the referees should come from top-rated departments or otherwise be leaders in the field. They should be full professors or stellar associate professors.

Because external evaluators must be able to provide an objective evaluation of the work, it is essential that ad hoc committees ascertain the relationship of those individuals with the candidate so that letters will not be sought from persons who cannot provide an arm's-length evaluation. The ad hoc committee should not seek evaluations from former advisors, post-doctoral supervisors, close personal friends, or others having a relationship with the candidate that might reduce objectivity. If a candidate publishes co-authored works in a field where co-authorship is not the accepted norm, and the ad hoc committee wishes to call on one of the co-authors to comment on the candidate's dossier, it should clarify why it is necessary or desirable to do so.

Contacting external referees

- The ad hoc committee emails (weinberg_assistdeanfacultyadvancement@northwestern.edu) to the Dean's Office the names and affiliations of proposed referees and the candidate's "specific field," the latter is included in the letter to referees.
- The Dean's Office emails each referee asking for their participation. Significant publications (especially books and unpublished manuscripts) are offered at that time. (See Enclosure 2.) Each referee receives a packet of key publications designated by the candidate.
- The Dean's Office informs the committee of the status of the responses and passes along recommendations regarding additional potential referees.
- The Dean sends a formal letter to external referees (similar to Enclosure 3). The ad hoc committee may wish to rephrase it in light of the particular concerns in a given case, such as a high rate of collaboration. A copy of the CV is included with the letter, as are the candidate's statement, a set of 5-6 key publications, and a confidentiality statement.

Student referees. The names of 5 to 7 former students are provided by the department. The Dean's Office routinely selects a sample of 25 additional graduate and undergraduate students from the candidate's classes from prior semesters and from among advisees. Normally, the Dean's Office collects about 8-12 responses. Enclosure 4 goes to the candidate's former students.

A candidate who was evaluated recently. If the candidate has been considered for promotion (or appointment) during the past three years, the ad hoc committee may see the letters from external referees that were solicited at that time. The committee should seek letters from other referees to supplement those; it may also draft letters (for the Dean's signature) to the previous referees requesting an evaluation of work since that time.

Mechanics

Publications. The candidate's full corpus of publications (except books, if applicable) is available for the committee's review in Faculty Folio RPT. (The Dean's Office will deliver a copy of each book to ad hoc committee members' departmental mailboxes.)

Distinction of referees. The Dean's Office needs a brief description of the importance of each referee not on the department's list.

Policy change on benchmarks. Beginning in 2021-2022, following changes in the Provost's policies, the College is no longer requiring the identification of benchmarks. Instead, the Dean's letter to external evaluators will ask evaluators to compare the candidate's scholarly achievements with those of other scholars of similar rank whom they deem to be top scholars in the field. Normally, these comparisons should be made to scholars appointed in programs considered to be among the very best nationally in the discipline.

Second wave of letters. If the response rate is low or if names of additional referees come to light, letters may be sent out until mid-January. If necessary, the Dean's Office will report to the committee in January about the state of responses, noting who has received the candidate's publications.

IV. The Report

Due date. The committee's report, which must be signed by all members, is submitted to the Dean in early February.

Content. The report should demonstrate that a thorough review was undertaken and that the candidate's work and promise have been measured against high standards. The following items should be incorporated into the report.

- The nature of the candidate's professional contributions.
- The strengths and the weaknesses of the candidate's research, teaching, and service as reflected in the materials, especially the letters from external and student evaluators.
- The status and potential of ongoing work or "the second project," as these relate to the candidate's trajectory.
- Overall comparison of the candidate to scholars whom external referees deem to be the best in the candidate's field (Such comments may or may not be offered by external referees.).
- The breadth of the candidate's influence and likelihood that the candidate will make (or continue to make) exceptional contributions to the field.
- Quotations from external and student referees and an indication of whether some opinions carried more weight than others. The candidate's department does not read the letters, so it is important that the ad hoc report quote significant negative views as well as positive comments. **Please use the terms "referee A" or "student 3" rather than naming names in the report.**
- The vote, number for and against promotion. Do not indicate who voted which way if the vote is split. If the committee wishes to use a scale of its own to indicate the strength of its assessments, it may do so, as long as the meaning of its scale is spelled out clearly. If there are doubts about the excellence of the work, the appropriate vote is no.
- In the case of a split vote, the committee may submit one report that reflects both the positive and negative positions, or the members may choose to submit majority and minority reports.

Whatever the committee's recommendation, its report should set forth the merits of the case objectively and dispassionately. The Dean, Provost, and Committee on Tenure all rely on the analysis, standards, and evidence set forth by the ad hoc committee.

Who reads the report?

In addition to the Dean and Committee on Tenure, the members of the department who voted on the case are allowed to read a redacted copy of the ad hoc report. They are not allowed to see the letters from external scholars or students. Accordingly, the report should include a full digest of and brief quotations from external referees' letters. Students' opinions should be similarly treated. Departments rely heavily on the report to gain insight into the candidate's performance and standing. When an ad hoc committee's vote is split or negative, it is especially important that the report give a full accounting of external opinion and the committee's reasoning. Department readers, as well as the Committee on Tenure, ask that the report specify the opinions of any referee or referees that have weighed heavily in the committee's decision, and explain why.

In a few cases where individuals have appealed a negative decision by the Dean, the College has been required to release the edited ad hoc committee report to the candidate, along with other materials.

After turning in the report.

Reports will be reviewed by the Dean's Office with an eye to the kinds of questions the Committee on Tenure often raises. If necessary, the Dean's Office will ask the ad hoc committee to clarify or amplify points in the report. (Not incidentally, the Committee on Tenure has complained about the brevity and vagueness of some ad hoc committees' observations about the quality of candidates' teaching.)

When the final decisions have been made, the Dean's Office will notify you of the outcome of the case. Thank you for participating in these important reviews.

Dear Professor Z:

Northwestern University is currently reviewing Barney Stone for the grant of tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor of Celtic Languages. I am writing in advance of Dean Randolph's formal letter to find out whether you would be willing to serve as a referee in this case. If so, or if you would like to see the vita before deciding, we will send you the full request. We hope to have letters of evaluation by February 1.

As you may know, Professor Stone works in the field of Celtic folklore. We have copies of his new manuscript, *Y*, along with several recent articles and his first book, *M*, and would be happy to send you whatever you would like to read. The Dean's advisory committee is interested in hearing not only from experts who are already conversant with Dr. Stone's publications, but also from "outsiders" who can provide a broader perspective or who can comment on only part of the work.

Finally, I wonder whether you might be able to suggest 2 or 3 other senior authorities in the field whom I might contact.

We would be grateful for any assistance you can give us in this important decision.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kim
Assistant Dean for Faculty Advancement
[Northwestern University](#) | Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences
1918 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208
tel: 847.467.0578
fax: 847.491.4289

Date

Professor XYZ
University of ABC

Dear Professor Z:

Thank you for your assistance in our deliberations concerning the promotion of a member of our faculty. The Department of [DEPT] has recommended that [CANDIDATE], now an assistant professor, be promoted to the rank of associate professor, a promotion that confers tenure. An ad hoc committee considering this recommendation has asked me to request your opinion of their professional work and standing as well as their future promise as a scholar.

The committee and I would appreciate having your views about the quality and the importance of Professor [LAST NAME]'s contributions to the study of [CANDIDATE'S FIELD]. How much impact has their scholarship had? Which, if any, of the published works constitute fundamental and original contributions to the field? If their arguments are controversial, are they well-formulated and well-supported by both evidence and reasoning? Are there weaknesses we should be aware of? What is your expectation of the candidate's future career trajectory? If this candidate were a member of your department, would they be granted tenure at this time? Would you yourself vote for such a promotion in your department?

We would be especially grateful, moreover, for your comparative assessment of Prof. [LAST NAME] with the very best scholars in the field who are roughly of the same seniority or slightly more advanced and whom you consider to be among the best in the field. Making appropriate allowances for differences in stages of careers, how does Prof. [NAME] stand in relation to them? Although such estimates are often not easy or comfortable to make, we often find them valuable.

A copy of Prof. [NAME]'s *curriculum vitae* is enclosed along with selected publications. If you would like other materials, we would be happy to send you whatever you need. Please place a collect call to me or Elizabeth Kim, Assistant Dean for Faculty Advancement, at (847) 467-0578; we shall do our best to see that you get what you need quickly. Should you wish to use e-mail, please use the following special address reserved for promotion matters: wcas-deanpromotion@northwestern.edu.

We are grateful for your advice and will look for your letter by February 1. Your response will play a valuable part in our important decision.

Sincerely,



Adrian Randolph
Dean

Date

Ms. XYZ
Elder Hall
Evanston Campus

Dear Ms. XYZ:

Professor Katy Dids of the Department of Entomology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences is now being considered for promotion by a small confidential committee of College faculty members who are not in her department. This is part of our standard procedure for conducting promotion reviews. On behalf of that committee, I am writing to ask you, as a student who has taken one or more classes with this candidate, to write a letter evaluating her as a teacher. When a Northwestern faculty member is considered for promotion, success in teaching is taken seriously into account, and it is therefore important that students have an opportunity to assist in our decisions.

How would you assess Professor Dids' strengths and weaknesses as a teacher? Among other things, did she convey ideas and information clearly? Was the course well organized and the instructor well prepared? Were discussions conducted respectfully and did they advance the intellectual goals of the class? Did you master a significant body of material in the class? Were you challenged to think or work in new ways? Did you receive constructive feedback on your work? The committee would welcome any other observations you deem relevant.

Beyond classroom presentations, teaching may be understood to include grading, guiding and advising students, directing independent study, and other related activities. The committee and I would welcome your comments on any of these activities, as appropriate.

Your identity as a correspondent of this confidential committee will be held in the strictest confidence. Your name will not be known to the faculty member in question or to anyone in her department. Only the members of the committee and I will see your letter. If you have questions about our procedures, by all means call Elizabeth Kim, Director of Faculty Advancement, at (847) 467-0578 or me at (847) 491-3276. E-mail messages may be sent to weinberg_assistdeanfacultyadvancement@northwestern.edu.

We will be greatly obliged if you will write directly to me by January 5. Your frank remarks will play a valued part in the committee's deliberations, and whatever help you can give us will be very much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,



Adrian Randolph
Dean

Standards for promotion

THE GRANT OF TENURE: POLICY

Northwestern's policy with regard to tenure seeks to foster a faculty of unqualified excellence. Any tenure decision calls for application of the highest standards with respect to professional achievement and promise in research and teaching. Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences aims for the superlative, and each case is evaluated on its own merits. When making a recommendation for tenure, a department must feel able to affirm that the candidate in question is as good a permanent appointment in their area as Northwestern is capable of making, now or in the foreseeable future, given both accomplishments to date and reasonable expectations as to future achievements. This same standard must be employed by others who participate in the review. Tenure is not awarded for competent service, solid research, and adequate teaching.

In most cases, professional achievement takes the form of research activity that results in publications or creative works that are published or publicly displayed. Departments – and subsequently ad hoc committees and the Weinberg College Committee on Tenure, acting with the advice of external referees – evaluate the quantity, but above all, the quality, creativity, importance, and influence of such work. They look for evidence of superior achievement relative to peer scholars, recognition of that achievement by senior colleagues both within and beyond the campus, and the promise of a career trajectory that will continue to affect the direction of their field and/or discipline. A positive recommendation to confer tenure should offer strong evidence supporting claims about the high quality of a candidate's work, the distinctiveness of their voice, and the degree of influence on the field. Candidates for tenure are expected to have established national and international reputations through their research, writing, and/or creative work. In all regards, the standard is a high level of excellence.

The quality of a candidate's teaching and their potential as a teacher are major factors affecting the decision to grant tenure. Teaching is defined broadly; it means not simply the ability to lecture, but also the faculty member's role vis-a-vis students in various contexts, from seminars or independent study to advising. Advising undergraduate students is a significant part of teaching since conveying to students what may be the best academic course for them to follow, given their interests and goals, is to help educate them. Mentoring of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (if relevant) is a highly significant part of teaching, as it involves nothing less than the preparation of the next generation's intellectual leaders, both within and beyond the academy. An institution devoted to instruction must weigh the quality of teaching in all decisions regarding its faculty.

Assistant professors, like other members of the tenure-line faculty, are expected to share in the duties of faculty governance. During the probationary period, the candidate may concentrate their university service at the departmental level. Departments should take care not to place overly heavy administrative duties on untenured faculty; nevertheless the expectation is that assistant professors will contribute to the smooth functioning of the department.

“EARLY” TENURE DECISIONS

Decisions about tenure need not be taken until the final year of the individual's probationary term. Departments and candidates alike should view it as normal that an individual takes the full number of years available to establish the influence of their scholarship, and the excellence of their teaching and service. There must be no presumption that an early recommendation for promotion is necessary to prove a candidate's strength. Tenure-track faculty should not be pressured to rush to a review that may prove to be premature.

When a faculty member has been granted an extension of the probationary period of one or more years, it is vital that the department thinks in terms of the number of probationary years the person has served rather than the number of calendar years. Thus, when a colleague is in their fifth probationary year, the department should not expect that person to come forward for a tenure decision even if it is the sixth year of appointment. To encourage or pressure an assistant professor to be reviewed for tenure before the sixth probationary year would cancel the equalizing effect that the extension policy is intended to achieve. Equally important, candidates with a year's extension are expected to have achieved the same productivity as any other faculty member in the sixth probationary year and not meet some more stringent standard. The ad hoc committees and Committee on Tenure are also instructed to consider what has been achieved during the probationary term and not in “X number of years” since hiring or since the PhD.

The guidelines and procedures, enclosures, and standards for promotion outlined above are current as of August 2021. Minor changes may be made after dissemination. Members of the faculty will be consulted if there are significant changes in procedures or standards.